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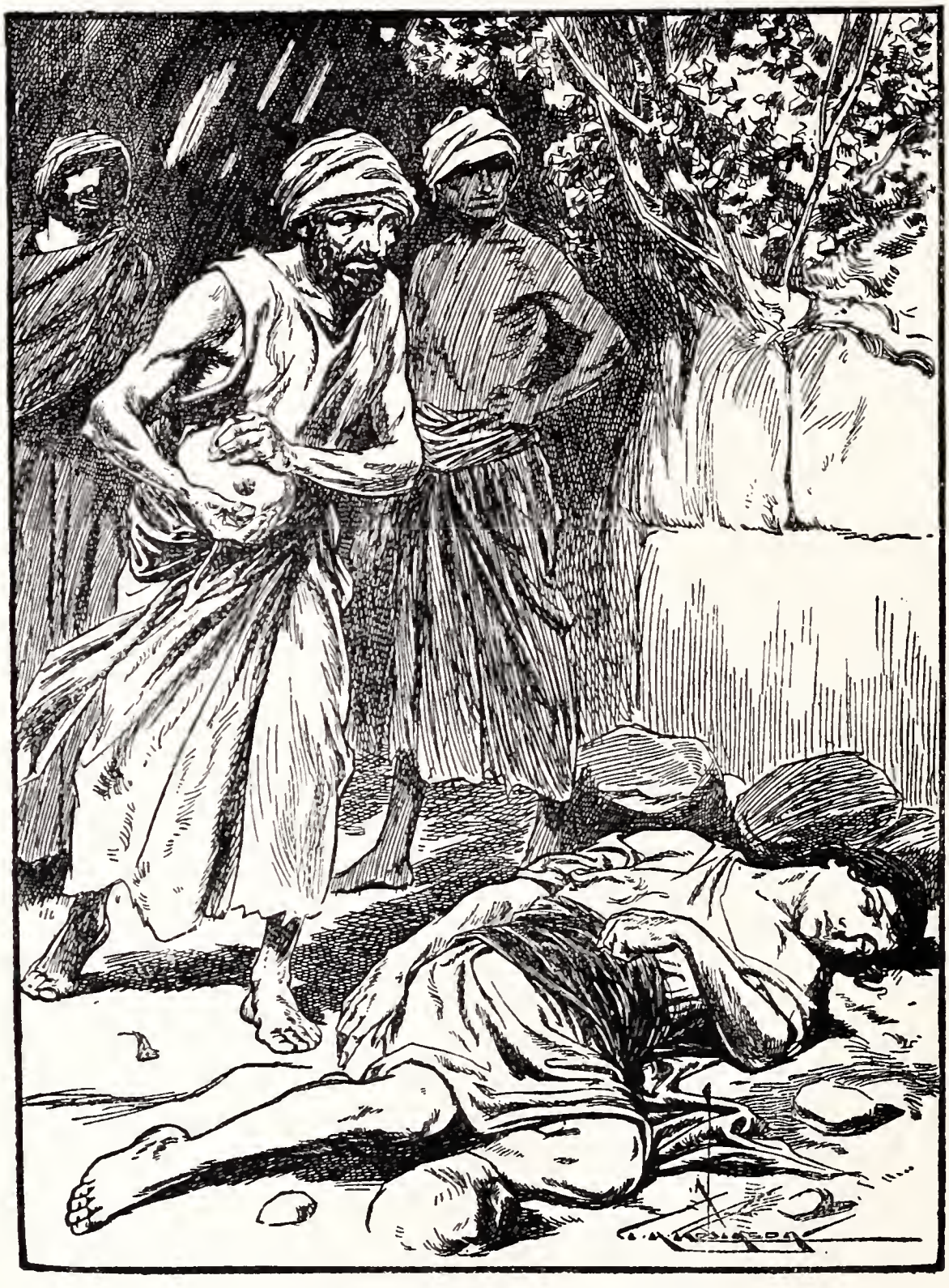

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. STEPHEN.

Frontispiece.

MARTYRS & SAINTS
OF THE FIRST TWELVE CENTURIES

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STUDIES FROM THE LIVES OF
THE BLACK LETTER SAINTS
OF THE ENGLISH CALENDAR

BY THE LATE
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MARTYRS AND SAINTS

OF THE

FIRST TWELVE CENTURIES.

INTRODUCTION.

ALL Calendars of Saints can but present us with types and samples, specimens more or less casual, of the great treasure of holy lives in the Church. The selection can but be as if the hands of a child had dived into a casket of precious ores or costly jewels, and taken up a few chance specimens of the contents. However many are gathered, the larger number, and often, perhaps, the choicest treasures, must be left behind. For the treasure is too large for any human hand to grasp; and the quality which makes it precious is in its deepest sense known only to Him who is the true Refiner of the silver, the true Sculptor of the gems. And, moreover, the metal is still in the ore; the jewels are but partially cut, and none of them is yet in its true setting. Yet, it must be admitted, at a first glance, our own Anglican Calendar does seem to have a peculiar casualness of its own.

That the Calendar should close altogether in the thirteenth century may not seem so unaccountable when we think that 1250 was not further from its revision in 1561

than the great Elizabethans are from us. Three hundred years is perhaps not too wide a distance to enable us to distinguish the relative level between the 'little hills' and the 'mountains of God.' The omissions within the space included are more difficult to understand. For the more perplexing there seem, however, to be two explanations: firstly, the comparatively insular character of the ancient English Calendars, on which our own is based; and secondly, that it is a partial restoration of a treasure for a time altogether lost.

Until the twelfth century, when canonisation became (like the conferring of a military order) more systematically the sole prerogative of the central sovereign authority, the additions to the Calendars seem to have rested with the bishop and council of each diocese, sacred names being added like birthdays in a family Bible. With the more organised centralisation came at once restriction and expansion; a sifting of mere local celebrity, and a wider grasp of choice.

Our own English Calendars, moreover, seem always to have had rather a peculiarly local and inexpansive character. Comparatively few names were added to the English Calendars from the eleventh or twelfth to the sixteenth century, though many were added to the Roman.[1]

And we must also remember that our Black Letter Festivals are a Restoration. In two Prayer Books of Edward VI. they were left out altogether. That some great names are still omitted may be a chance, but it is no mere chance that those remaining are there. It is the witness to the triumph of that wider sympathy, that fearless recognition of the continuity of life in the Church through all exaggerations and deficiencies, which seems characteristic of our Anglican Communion. It is the confession that the demands of the Master are unrelaxed, and the possibilities of the highest achievement undiminished throughout the ages; that the saints and martyrs are not an extinct species; that the Creator Spirit did not cease to create

[1] Blunt, *Annotated Prayer Book*.

saints at the close of the Apostolic Age, or at the great Division of Eastern and Western Christendom, or at the Reformation ; on both sides of all the barriers, 'moving on the face of the waters,' and giving men and women love and courage to live and to die martyrs for Christ,—in the darkest ages, as to-day in Africa, in Melanesia, or among the lepers of the Sandwich Islands,—in the streets of our own cities now as outside Jerusalem 1800 years ago. It is the recognition that the Day of Pentecost is 'fully come,' and come for ever. It is indeed comprehensible how an intense sense of the imperfection of all human holiness may, to souls freshly awakened to the supremacy, and the nearness, of Him who alone is at once the Spotless Sacrifice and the Priest for ever, have made the application of the title 'saint' to any human creature seem a presumption. The great Eucharistic hymn 'Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord' absorbs all other strains. Or, again, when we consider the entirely derivative and dependent character of all human goodness, we can understand how it can be doubted whether the name 'saint' should be given to any one redeemed and forgiven child rather than to another. All, all, it may be said, are chosen in that Holy One to be holy ; all or none are called to be saints, nothing lower and nothing less. As in our Eucharistic service, all are called to adore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, while all confess themselves below the dogs, *not* worthy to gather the crumbs under the Master's table.

But if *any* are to be thus honoured and set apart as heroes and leaders of the armies of heaven by this great title, it is surely of high moment that this distinction should not be limited to any era in the history of the Church, that the records of the highest Christian life should not be supposed to be closed with the New Testament.

A comparative study of the various Calendars brings out many points of interest.

The Oriental Calendar begins not centuries, but millenniums before any other, embracing the prophets of the

Jewish Church, such as Job, Isaiah, and Haggai. It contains also a most touching commemoration of 'the Holy Poor' three times a year—on June 28, July 1, and our All Saints' Day.

The modern Roman Calendar extends much further, through the great saints of the later Middle Ages to our own times.

This extension on opposite sides into the past and towards the present is very characteristic. The ancient Church of the East, conservative and steadfast, embraces in her reverent recollection those elder Apostles and Prophets on whose foundation the Christian Church acknowledges herself to be built by Him who came not to destroy but to fulfil, recognising the continuity of the present with the earliest past of those 'who through faith subdued kingdoms.'

On the other hand, the Latin Church, with her westward gaze and onward step, gathers into her starry crown the latest lights, scarcely yet sunk beneath our earthly horizon, recognising the identity of the first creative Inspiration with the last holy life breathed out but yesterday in our midst.

And between these two stands our own brief Calendar, based on the earliest used in England; in itself, like so many things in our most conservative and also most progressive England, an untouched relic and witness of the historical past swept on in the current of the present.

For, as has been said, the Sarum Calendar, on which our own is based, virtually closes before the irregular and natural growth of the local and national Calendars had been replaced (in the twelfth century) by the regular system of canonisation organised at Rome, with its 'Devil's Advocate' and forms of legal investigation.

In earlier days the names of the saints to be commemorated, being fixed by the Bishop of the Diocese, or the Diocesan Council, naturally vary according to the nationality to which they especially belong, Spanish, Gallican, or English, our own Calendar bearing witness to the early relations of our Church with France and Italy.

The centralisation of authority would naturally tend to

widen the range of vision and to lessen the vividness of local colouring.

The modern Roman Calendar, whilst omitting some of the local saints, adds more systematically the great names of the East—for instance, Polycarp, Ignatius, and the great Greek Fathers, Basil, Gregory, Chrysostom, and Athanasius. It also remains open for the admission of new names from century to century,—a power of expansion which the English Church, having dropped (with the rest of Latin Christendom) the simple, old, uncritical method of the early martyrologies, and not accepting the authority of Rome, has naturally lost. But for that very reason our Calendar possesses a distinct historical interest of its own.

Of the omissions, the Sarum Calendar is responsible for the absence of St. Polycarp, St. Ignatius, and the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, of the Four Greek Fathers, and of St. Aidan, St. Anselm, and St. Bernard, who lived within its chronological limits. For the absence of St. Cuthbert the Commission of Revision have to answer.[1]

On the whole, about two-thirds of the names in the Sarum Calendar are left out, chiefly, it is said, because the Festivals being kept as holidays withdrew too much time from daily work. Nevertheless a goodly number remain to us.[2] The range of time embraced is from the first century to the thirteenth; the range of secular callings extends from the king to the shoemaker; the countries embraced are Asia Minor, Egypt, the shores of Carthage, Italy, Dalmatia, Greece, Spain, France, and Flanders, besides our own; so that the scope of subject and of sympathy is by no means narrow. To follow the footsteps of one after another of these

[1] The name of Thomas à Becket (St. Thomas of Canterbury), once commemorated three times a year, and erased, it is said, in deference to the vehement dislike of Henry VIII.; the festival of St. Patrick, left out, we must hope, by accident; and All Souls, the Commemoration of the Departed, were restored in a Calendar published by the Stationers' Company, with the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, up to the year 1832. It is interesting to observe the recognition of two of the Greek Fathers, St. John Chrysostom and St. Athanasius, in the Prayer Book, although not in the Calendar.

[2] Some, probably, retained for local and secular considerations, such as annual fairs, or terms in law courts.

moulders of Christendom is like climbing the slopes of a mountain by an unusual road, to house after house on its slopes, and whilst we make acquaintance with the inmates of each dwelling, finding in each a new point of view from which we see the whole land around and below in a new aspect.

And, after all, the inspiring conviction abides with us that in all the Calendars what is left out must be infinitely more than what is included. No calendar yet existing includes the names of Alfred the Great or Joan of Arc; while, curiously enough, *all* include St. Catherine of Alexandria—of whom Tillemont says not a fact in her legend is certain—and St. George, of whose history a writer of devout meditations says its chief lesson is that saints of whom man can know nothing at all may yet be great before God. And all the Catalogues of Saints, like the first muster-roll of the 11th chapter of Hebrews, have to stop at one point or another with 'The time would fail me to tell.' All the numbered 'twelve thousands' have to expand at last into the 'great multitude which no man can number.' All the calendars have to be supplemented by an All Saints' Day.

THE MARTYRS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MARTYROLOGIES.

ONE of the first characteristics of the Calendar that must strike us all is the foundation of the Christian Church on martyrdom. The 'Vincit qui patitur' is emblazoned around it all. Half of the whole number in our Prayer Book were martyrs; the Corner Stone, the Crucified Christ; the foundation stones, those who follow Him, obedient unto death. The walls of the city do not seem able to rise except on this basis. From the first glorious forlorn hope apparently broken, but really all the while prevailing against the first 'gates of the enemy,' the old paganism of Asia, Carthage, and Rome—to the brave Devonshire man who fell in the ninth century leading the attack against the barbarism of the Teutonic North, and the English king and archbishop who fell under a fresh onrush of the heathen Norsemen—up to our own days in Africa and the Southern Seas, not only is the whole fabric of the Christian Church founded on martyrdom, but every fresh conquest over every fresh foe seems to be thus necessarily consecrated by fresh sacrifice.

Not, indeed, that any book of spiritual peerage can include all who were truly martyrs. We all know, indeed, that the voluntary sufferings and sacrifices of Christian life may often be as great in themselves and as triumphant a

witness for Christ as any sufferings of death. But the great principle of conquering by suffering is emphatically asserted through the martyrs. Not by wars such as those of Joshua, nor by prosleytising armies such as those of the early Mahometans, but by martyrdom is Christianity as Christianity, the Church as the Church spread. The army of the Church is the 'noble army of martyrs.' With the martyrs, therefore, these sketches of the Black Letter Saints must begin.

The history of the martyrologies, the Acta Martyrum, on which all the calendars are based, is in itself a most characteristic portion of ecclesiastical history. The stories of the martyrs seem naturally to divide themselves into historical and legendary, and a borderland between the two.

The very history of the word *legend* itself is full of significance. The legends of the martyrs were the *legenda collecta* of the martyrdoms to be read on the day of commemoration. About this the ancient Church of Rome was especially careful and cautious, forbidding any stories of doubtful origin, of whose authors and witnesses the names were not known, to be accepted among the *legenda* in the churches.[1]

But this reverent care was not followed in all directions; a town, village, or afterwards monastery, in its eagerness to glorify its own especial local saint, might accept too easily, on little authority, any words, or deeds, or miraculous interpositions which seemed to give colour and detail to the marvellous story; and so probably by degrees the word *legend* grew to mean not a carefully attested history, but the imaginative story which sprang up around it; the growth of legend becoming most exuberant where the fact around which it entwines is feeblest. Possibly scarcely one of the old stories, often so picturesque, so quaint, and so beautiful as parables, exists without some germ of actual history. But it is not around such natural and characteristic

[1] De Smedt, *Introductio in Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, p. 115. The religious romances or mediæval tracts for edification constructed *out of the legend* or history are of course on another level altogether.

histories as that of Perpetua and Felicitas, of Polycarp and Ignatius, or Cyprian, that the wealth of legend accumulates; it is rather around such brief and momentary glimpses of fact as gleam through the stories of Agnes or Agatha, St. George or St. Catherine.

In the early ages there must have been a large accumulation of Christian documents relating to the martyrs. It is the destruction of these documents in the persecution of Diocletian which swept such a wide field clear for the subsequent growth of romantic legend. And if the records thus destroyed were like the stories still preserved to us in the *Acta* of Perpetua and Felicitas the loss is great indeed.

The faith and courage which upheld the martyrs in death must evidently have represented a large amount of faith and love equally ready for the sacrifice. The martyrologies so lovingly and carefully compiled while the persecution was still in force were as really a witness to the faith as the martyrdoms. Not only did the Christians visit their confessors in the prison, acknowledge them at the torture and executions, reverently recover the torn and tortured bodies, bearing them as sacred treasures to the catacombs, and then in intimate converse gather together and record the faithful words they had heard and the patient sufferings they had seen. They went to the public notaries and obtained when they could copies of the official records of the trial, often purchasing these—so precious historically from the prosaic coldness of their official accuracy—at a considerable cost.

And thus from these records of Roman persecutions, pieced together with the recollections of the Christians who had dared to witness the sufferings they were so likely to share, or who knew certain details of the life given up for Christ, were slowly collected the story, the earliest Legenda or Lections, which were the historical treasure of each city which possessed them and of the whole Church, to be *read* when the brethren assembled by their graves in the catacombs, on the birthday of the martyr, or in connection with the Eucharistic commemoration of the Master.

So the Acts of the Apostles flowed on into the Acta Martyrum, and the Church history, which is from beginning to end founded not chiefly on *teaching*, but on *living* and *dying*, was slowly growing from age to age, until at last the pagans began to learn the power of this historical faith, and, not being able to quench the life which created the history, directed their assaults against the history which nourished the life.

In the great persecution of Diocletian, the last Imperial and general attack on the Church, the force of the enemy was directed towards the destruction of the Christian documents : the Sacred Scriptures, which were the history and law of the whole Church, happily too universally diffused to be destroyed ; and the Acta Martyrum, which were the especial glory and heritage of the various cities and villages where the martyrs had suffered.

As regards these precious local contemporary records, the attack seems to have been sadly successful. In many cases there may have been only one manuscript copy, carefully laid up in the church or place of assembly with the sacred vessels and vestments, to be read on the days of commemoration, the sacred ' Birthdays.'

In too many instances this one precious record seems to have been destroyed. Afterwards, no doubt, efforts were made to recover the story from memory ; but the authenticity of the official legal record, the quiet force of its bare statements of word or fact, the vivid touches of those who heard and saw, and told what they had heard and seen, at a moment when every detail of words and looks remembered was infinitely more sacred than any eulogistic phrases about them, the individuality, the local colouring, the naturalness, were lost irreparably ; and instead came the story dim through the distance of ages, and also through the halo of the very fervour of the reverence which enshrined it, magnified by worship, stunted to the stature of the narrator, dwarfed and dimmed from a great and simple human, Christian story into a mere religious lesson-book ; until, in place of the far deeper poetry of the history,

that other literature arises, not, indeed, without its own fantastic beauty and its own high teaching, which we call Legend.

The faith and love of later ages takes the beloved names out of the mist, and clothes them with its own ideal in a new world of Christian legend. St. Margaret, the type of womanly purity, destroys the dragon that devours her. St. George, type of the true chivalry which is not only to keep itself pure, but to save, rescues the maiden from the dragon; St. Cæcilia wins her bridegroom from earthly joys to holy works of charity, and by her touch and heavenly singing consecrates music as the great Christian art; St. Catherine with her eloquent lips is the mighty maiden Athene of Christian science; St. Christopher with his lovely parable story of the strong serving the weak, finds in the helpless childhood he serves the Divine Lord who saves. Greece and the wild North pour their gold into the crucible of Christian legend, and it comes forth the 'pure gold, like transparent glass' of the heavenly city. Thus the history of the martyrologies is the history of much besides the martyrs.

But the 'Acta Sincera Martyrum' brings us down to the very rock on which the City is built.

In attempting to make a distinct division between the legendary and the historical it must be remembered that there must often be a borderland between the events of each life, and between the various lives so classified, where both elements meet. But, practically, without subtle critical dissection the distinction is sufficiently apparent.

Clement of Rome, Nicomede, Fabian, Perpetua, Cyprian, stand out, veiled, indeed, and seen but in glimpses, but solidly individual and historical, in the struggle of the first three centuries against the classical paganism of Greece and Rome; as Boniface, Alphege, and Edmund, in the later conflict with the heathen barbarism of the North. The Christian warfare of those centuries is represented in their life and death. Between these, legend and history intertwined inextricably in their stories, are Alban, Denys

Crispin, Lawrence, and Vincent, yet still giving the impression of individual historical growth, garlanded with legend. And on the other hand, from those three first martyr centuries a radiant band shines on us, surely also representing lives lived and sacrificed for Christ, yet so blended with the ideals of purity, and charity, and Christian grace they no doubt helped to create, that Agnes with her lamb, Margaret, daisy and pearl of Paradise, Catherine with her royal state, her Plato, her mathematics, and her stars, Cæcilia with her beauty and her music, Lucy and Agatha, stand before us rather as symbols of the purity and chivalry they embody than as men and women of mortal mould; the individuality is lost in the type.

CHAPTER II.

THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE FIRST CENTURY.[1]

The first pagan or imperial persecution has left us no definite names of martyrs, except those of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Those living torches in the gardens of Nero on the Vatican flash on the pagan world, as they would have wished, not their own names, but the name of Jesus only, and the existence of His Church.

The seal which that persecution set on the Church may no doubt be read in the Apocalypse, written a few years afterwards: the 'souls under the altar,' 'the white-robed multitudes who came out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white, not in those rivers of their own blood, but in the blood of the Lamb,' 'the armies of heaven on white horses riding after the Crucified, conquering and to conquer.'

A flood of light is thrown on the Apocalypse by connecting it with that first persecution.

Within the imperial eternal city a new city was being silently built, Imperial indeed and Eternal, the City of God.

Beside this corrupt and degraded civilisation, which was 'corrupting the whole earth,' a new ideal of purity, not dreamt of before, was dawning. The 'Bride, spotless and radiant, 'clothed in fine linen, pure and white,' was in the world. Every martyr in the arena, every strong young life yielded up to death rather than sin, proclaimed this new

[1] The two festivals in our Calendar belonging to this century are St. John ante Port. Lat. and St. Nicomede.

purity, not merely passive but saving, this new love, not only patient but passionate, which had come into the world.

Most expressive is the fact that no new individual name has come down to us from that first persecution of Nero, but to the world and to the Church a new Apocalypse of Christ, the Lamb that was slain, and the Bride of the Lamb ; and also (as urgently needed) an Apocalypse of the wrath of the Lamb. It declares in the 'voices of many thunders' that cruelty and lust, injustice and oppression, tyranny of the strong against the weak, are *not* inevitable evils which the easy gods regard, or disregard, with indulgent indifference ; that they are abhorred in heaven, that the Christian heaven is no mere serene supernal abode of smiles and sunshine ; thunders and lightnings are in it, the severity of love, the vengeance of patience, the wrath not of the lion, but the Lamb.

For beyond all that diseased imagination can conceive, the diseased imagination of that wretched madman who had Rome and the Roman Empire in his grasp seems really to have inflicted on the Christians of Rome in that sixty-fifth year of the Christian era.

'The world,' it is said, 'was abandoned to a monster. There was no means of getting rid of him. His German Guard, which had all to lose if he fell, defended him with rage. At once grandiose and grotesque, as Nero was literary his madness was chiefly literary. The dreams of all the ages, all the poems, all the legends, Bacchus and Sardanapalus, Ninus and Priam, Troy and Babylon, Homer and the faded poesy of his own times floated like a chaos through that poor brain of a mediocre artist, on whom chance had bestowed the power of realising all his chimeras.

'It was after the murder of his mother, Agrippina, that cruelty began to invade his active life. Every year was marked by fresh crimes. Nero proclaims daily that the only serious thing is art ; all virtue is a lie. The dilettante threatens men with torture if they do not admire his verses. The madness of Caligula was short ; he was a

buffoon, but had wit. On the contrary, the madness of Nero, usually weak and frivolous, was at times frightfully tragic. Yet with all his cruelty this wretched being had a sentiment for art.

In those days art had indeed lost its way. 'The gigantic passed for great; it was an age of colossal statues, of art, materialistic, theatrical, falsely pathetic.'

'There was an ignoble taste for tableaux vivants.' The most ferocious and impure myths were actually represented on the stage, by criminals, who amused the people by deaths of frightful, ignominious torture.

'Nero had a mania for magnificent buildings. His Golden House was a world; with its porticoes three miles long, its parks with flocks, its solitudes, its vineyards.' [1]

But this was only a preparation. He desired and planned to rebuild the whole city of Rome. To rebuild, it was necessary to clear the ground; and to clear the ground no means would be so efficacious as a conflagration.

'It is known that the burning of Troy had acquired a terrible power over his fancy. He had been accustomed to act it from his childhood.' [2]

The legend that Nero set fire to Rome in order to imitate the burning of Troy, and that he contemplated the flames, lyre in hand, in a theatrical costume, from a tower, represents the contemporary conviction that he used, and probably promoted, the spread of the conflagration to make space for rebuilding Rome, as he did, with wide spaces and imperial magnificence.

On July 19, A.D. 64, the fire broke out. 'It began at the Porta Capena, in the Circus Maximus, near the Palatine and the Cœlian, a quarter which contained many shops full of inflammable material. Thence it raged round the Palatine, ravaged the low ground of the Velabrum and the Forum, climbed the hills, descended again into the valleys, raged six days and seven nights among those compact and winding streets. The conflagration seemed to arise at several points at once Of the fourteen quarters into which the city was

[1] Renan, *L'Antéchrist.* [2] Ibid.

divided four only remained entire; three were entirely destroyed.[1]

'To Nero the old sacred associations of the Republic, the old patriotic memories of the patrician houses, were less than nothing. But to every true heart in Rome they were unutterably dear. All the most precious antiquities were gone; the most sacred trophies, ancient ex-votos and monuments, the most honoured temples, all had disappeared. The whole city was in mourning for its most cherished recollections.'[2]

The city was cleared for his rebuilding. But the flames were raging in the hearts of the citizens.

Nero had to appease the storm he had roused, and it seems clear that, whoever first made the suggestion, he sought to fill the gulf he had opened by throwing into it the infant Christian Church of Rome.

In the midst of that luxurious, corrupt city, with its cruel pleasures, its lawless crimes, its base servilities, had silently arisen a band of men and women, of all ranks, and people, and kindred, and tongues, Greek slaves, Roman women of the noblest families, Jews and Jewesses, bound to each other, and separated from the rest of the world, by a faith and a worship which made them abandon all other worship as a crime, and seek to make others abandon it, which made them chaste, and true, and good, yet open to admit and save the lowest and worst. A secret society, dangerous therefore on political grounds; a secret society moreover claiming, it was said, to be a universal kingdom, into which they called on its subjects to enter as a supreme duty and privilege for all.

Ties of country, even of kindred, seemed feeble to the ties which bound them to each other. To the world outside their bearing was austere. The social gatherings, with the customary national religious rites, they carefully avoided. The amphitheatre they detested. The combats of men or beasts did not amuse them.

They were said to be 'atheists.' They rigidly avoided

[1] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall.* [2] Renan, *L'Antéchrist.*

all religious rites, spoke of all the gods of Rome as 'nothing,' mere dreams, or worse, as evil dæmons, confounding Olympus and Tartarus.

Yet, in spite of all this moroseness to the outside world, there was something in them, or among them, which every now and then fell on the best and sweetest and loftiest souls like an irresistible spell.

Those doors so open to all who would enter seemed to those who entered to shut in a home of warmth and light, a world of love and hope and peace, compared with which all the world outside was as a cold Hades of shades and dreams. There was a love there, a purity undreamed of elsewhere, love ready to sacrifice all to succour or to save each other; love as of mothers for young children, of children for aged parents. They called each other brothers and sisters. And there was worship there. One Name was spoken among them which seemed to have over them the power of the name of Athens to the Athenians of her prime, of Rome to the Romans of the old patriotic days, the power of the name of a bridegroom to the chaste matrons of earlier Rome, the power of the name of a great general to the soldiers he leads to victory, the power of the name of God to a devout Jew. And yet this Name belonged to One whose countrymen had persecuted Him to death, who had led no one to victory, who, so far from leading His followers to triumph or success, had Himself ended His life in the most utter defeat, and who promised His followers no destiny more glorious than treading in His steps. They spoke, indeed, of His returning ; but also of going to Him by dying, which made death to many of them no menace, but a promise. Immortality with these enthusiasts was no mere slight overweight of carefully balanced arguments, no mere dim dream of an ancient faith shrouded in mysteries. It was simply a swallowing up of death in life, which made death to them but an incident in life, their own individual life and the life of the society.

This society, moreover, invaded the philosophers' schools,

professing to make the Divine Ambrosia of elect intelligences the common bread of common men, women, and children. It troubled social and family life by its dreams of brotherhood. It undermined political life by its claim to be a universal kingdom.

And withal it was a religion not simply entreating toleration, but demanding universal allegiance, and aiming at nothing less than the abolition of all other religions, or at least the absorption of all into itself. For above all, and beneath all, and through all, it was an absorbing personal devotion to this Jesus, the Lord Christ, who they admitted had died, whom all men knew to be dead, but whom they affirmed to be alive. Brothers, disciples, believers, all these names they accepted ; but the only name which really defined them, in which they gloried, was the name of Christian.

'I am a Christian,' was a bond which they acknowledged among each other as a claim to any amount of mutual succour and sacrifice, all over the world, from Syria to Britain.

'I am a Christian' was a confession they would maintain, it was said, through any amount of torture unto death. It was also said that they often threatened the destruction not of the city only but of the whole world, especially by fire. That they should have sought to hasten the consummation by setting fire to this Rome which they thought so wicked was at least conceivable. It was a suspicion which, kindled designedly, scattered recklessly, might spread as easily as the conflagration itself, which Nero had probably found it so easy to promote and now found it as easy as it was convenient to turn to the disadvantage of this mysterious, dreaded, despised society.

And if he could succeed in fastening this suspicion upon them many other advantages would follow. Not only would the anger of the people be turned from himself, but for them and himself, out of the conflict with this new fanaticism might be created a drama, a theatrical entertainment, more realistic, more passionate, more artistic, and more wildly exciting than any yet dreamt of.

For those Christians, while ready to die, eager even to die for this Name, which was to them as a magic spell, had something which, in spite of their fearlessness of death, made life and its pure affections, the freedom of men, the chastity of women, not less but more sacred and precious to them than to all beside.

Depths of anguish, therefore, were possible to them in seeing each other suffer, which might make a persecution of Christians a spectacle more pathetic, more tragic, more capable of exciting varied emotions than any poem or drama ever conceived by Homer or Æschylus.

The wildest horrors of the most diseased imagination were actually perpetrated above the charred ruins of those devastated hills.

'The victims were kept for a *fête* to which, no doubt, was given the character of an expiation.' 'The day may be fixed as about August 1, A.D. 64, a day after the day when Jesus expired on Golgotha, the most solemn in the history of Christianity.'[1]

The *ludus matutinus*, the morning performance of that day, was to be the torture of the first Christian martyrs in the Circus Maximus; the evening entertainment, their being burnt alive in the Vatican gardens.

For that August day also had its morning, and its evening, and its night like all other days.

They were clothed in skins, driven in troops into the arena, torn by wild dogs, dragged like Dirce on the horns of bulls; crucified. Many were suspended to gibbets, covered with resin or oil; and when that day of torture and massacre, of shame and glory was over, were set on fire in the gardens of Nero on the Vatican, flashing thence across the waste spaces of Rome.

Thus opened that Book of the Acts of the Martyrs called by one who saw its grandeur without sharing its inspiration 'that extraordinary poem of Christian martyrdom, that epic of the amphitheatre, which will last 250 years, and from

[1] Renan, *L'Antéchrist.*

which will spring the ennobling of woman, the emancipation of the slave.' One day of agony and shame, and one night. But that living illumination on the Vatican flashed not only over the waste spaces of ancient Rome; it began an illumination for the whole world, and all the ages, never since extinguished, to be extinguished never more.

This was in A.D. 64. The great muster-roll of the Epistle to the Hebrews was probably written about one year, the Apocalypse, with its visions of the Lamb and the Bride, Babylon, and the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, about four years afterwards. And characteristic indeed it is of the first strain of that new song from the earth that it gives us no names of individual sufferers, but only two names, the name of the Christ for whom they suffered and of the Christian Church.

But not only did that first persecution begin the 'glorious epic of 250 years;' it sets a stamp on suffering, on all that is meant by martyrdom, as the eternal foundation of the Christian Church and the Christian character in all ages.

For the Church is not an institution founded on a fact in the past. Eternal life thrills through every throb of her being at every moment. She is for ever being created, being founded. Every age, every character, every one of the living stones is built down to the living Rock, the Corner Stone; and, therefore, the martyr ages and the martyr spirit are never past.

The foundation of every fresh conquest is fresh sacrifice; the foundation of every Christian character is willing sacrifice. And this gives such endless interest to the story of the ancient martyr ages. They typify in eternal forms, grand and clear, the little conflicts and victories of the complicated struggles of each age. The age or the character which has not this imperial stamp on it can never conquer, can never found.

What do we mean by martyrdom? This great word like all others, may be degraded; but the great word and fact remains. And it is good to ask ourselves every now and

then what those foundation words mean. For this word is at the foundation of Christian thought, as the fact is at the foundation of the Christian Church.

The word martyrdom is in a sense peculiar to Christianity. The faith of the Jewish nation, when its people were in exile among idolaters, certainly could and did lead to death. Daniel at his prayers at the open window, in the lions' den, the three children in the fire were martyrs of the noblest. But in each of these stories it is interesting to observe that the supernatural intervention resulted not in sustaining the sufferers in suffering and death, but in saving them from death, and even from suffering.

In these persecutions, indeed, we know, some 'were tortured, not accepting deliverance,' but the very essence of Christian martyrdom is that the sufferers are not saved from suffering or death, but strengthened to suffer and to die.

It is also possible, no doubt, that Mahometanism, or any real religious conviction, especially any theistic faith, may have its martyrs in the protest against idolatry.

But Mahometan conquest is professedly founded on the victory of force rather than of patience. It is no exaggeration to say that the Moslem spread his faith by wielding the sword, the Christian by submitting to it.

Three things seem essentially involved in this word martyrdom : bearing witness to truth ; passive endurance ; and voluntary sacrifice. Mind, heart, and will are blended in it, in the whole and in every part.

The truth witnessed to, at all events with the martyrs we have now to do with, is no mere assertion of an intellectual proposition ; it is loyalty to a Person. When Perpetua, laying her hand on a pitcher that stood near, said, 'Can you say this pitcher is not a pitcher? No more can I say I am not a Christian,' she meant not only that she could not tell a lie, but that she could not betray a trust. Her words had really a similar significance with those of Polycarp : 'These seventy years I have found Him a true Master, and can I deny Him now?'

Fidelity to truth, loyalty to the Person, proved by suffering to death, this is the essence of martyrdom. For that the suffering should issue not in rescue but in death is essential to the enrolling of any name as martyr in the Christian Calendar. Others are confessors, and many perhaps have suffered more. But to be a martyr in the sense of the Martyrologies the sufferer must die. The issue must be into the immortal life, not back into this.

And in this there is nothing to make these high examples inaccessible to our own following in these days of peace. Independent of the fact that actual death in our own days has been encountered and is again and again embraced by men who have fought against the especial wrongs of our own especial battle, it is well to have the endurance all are called to set before us, in its extremest form by some.

Any age, any character, which stops short of the quick decision for right at any cost, the determined carrying out of conviction at any peril, which leaves out the soldierly qualities, renunciation, austerity, readiness to endure hardness (call them 'ascetic' or 'Puritan,' or what we will), can only end in failure, in effeminacy, and in barrenness. Without the discipline, the hardness, the endurance as of the most devoted love of woman, the courage as of the most heroic of men, of which the spirit of martyrdom is the culmination and the type, Christian life, human life, would soon lose not merely its strength but its beauty, would cease to be luxuriant and free and fruitful.

We must never lose hold of the possibility of death and apparent failure—of the Cross, as the possible issue of our own especial conflict—if our warfare is to be part of the world's great battle, not a mere faction fight, and our victories not mere triumphs but conquests.

And martyrdom must involve patience—the glorifying of the passive side of virtue. It has been made a reproach of Christianity that it brings out too exclusively this passive, feminine side of our nature. That it does bring out the passive graces as never before there can be no doubt.

Losing sight of them we lose sight of the essence of Christ's life. But in all true patience there is as much courage as endurance. And in Christian martyrdom the extreme of patience in enduring is inextricably blended with the most unconquerable strength of will. It is of the essence of Christian martyrdom that there is a choice in it; that the sufferer is free to escape; that the sacrifice is voluntary. The whole effort of the persecutor is to subdue the will of the sufferer; at any moment of the trial the sufferer, by a single word, belying his convictions, by the smallest act of compliance, such as throwing a few grains of incense on a shrine, could be set at liberty. In other words, the martyr is essentially no helpless victim, but from beginning to end a willing sacrifice. And thus the ages of martyrdom result in no passive community of bondsmen, but in a force of individual life, a freedom of thought and conscience, down to the lowest ranges of society, never before known except in the loftiest character on the highest levels.

The contemporary records of the martyrdoms are, it is most interesting to remark, not called the sufferings of the martyrs, but their 'Acts.' And yet again, this voluntariness, this freedom of choice, this absolute exertion of will, need not prevent the stories of the martyrs from being the consolation of the lowliest sufferer helplessly laid on a sick bed. 'To accept is to resign;' to resign willingly is to sacrifice. Interior acts, acts of the soul, are certainly not less real than those of the body. Faith and hope and love can transform inflictions of suffering into acts of sacrifice, because at the bottom the essence of martyrdom, as of all Christian life, all true human life, all Divine life, is love; love faithful unto death to truth and trust; love patient to endure; love mighty to resist, to overcome evil with good.

Nevertheless we do and will glory in having leaders who scaled the citadel of the enemy, carrying the common standard through the breach. The nobleness of that 'noble army' does not dwarf our little lives; it raises and

ennobles them. For those lives also were lived by moments, in hours and days, from morning to evening.

In the space between one morning and the next the first Great Persecution was accomplished. Three Hours gave us the story of the Cross.

St. John Evangelist ante Portam Latinam.

May 6.

(Sarum Epistle: Ecclus. xv. 1–6; Gospel, St. John xxi. 19–24.)

The tradition of 'St. John before the Latin Gate' is, that outside the Latin Gate—that is, the gate leading to Latium—he was thrown, by order of Domitian, into a caldron of boiling oil, which was to him no place of torture, but as a refreshing bath, in which the old man seemed to renew his youth; so that Domitian, seeing him come forth full of life and strength, attributed his deliverance to magic, but nevertheless was so far restrained by fear of the power which had sustained his victim that he dared not inflict any further sufferings on him, but banished him to Patmos, where he remained till the Emperor's death, when he returned to Ephesus.

There is also a legend that at the same time before the Latin Gate the Apostle was given a cup of poison, which he drank unhurt.

On the spot of his deliverance has stood a church from the days of the first Christian emperors. It is called S. Giovanni in Olio.

The Festival is in all the Calendars, and has given a name to 240 churches.[1]

[1] St. John before the Latin Gate was honoured in many places as their patron by printers, coopers, candle and lamp makers.

St. Nicomede

OF ROME.

June 1.

(In most Western Calendars. Martyred A.D. 81, under Domitian. Sarum Epistle, Ecclus. xiv. 20 and xv. 3-6; Gospel, St. Matt. xvi. 24-28.)

Two saints are enumerated in the Calendar of the first century, and both stand on its extreme verge. One, Nicomede, has the title of martyr (A.D. 90); the other, Clement (A.D. 100), is simply said to be bishop, but his name is in the ancient canon of the Roman Mass and he is often ranked among the martyrs.

Of Nicomede very little seems certainly known.

But it is interesting to observe that in the little known to us of the lives of both St. Clement and St. Nicomede the characteristic of each seems to have been Christian love, manifested in Nicomede especially in serving and honouring the martyrs, and by Clement in his endeavours to heal divisions in the Church of Corinth.

It was in the persecution of Domitian (A.D. 81) that St. Nicomede suffered. He was a priest at Rome, seized in the persecution for his assiduity in assisting the confessors and for his zeal towards the martyrs, whose bodies he searched out in order to bury them.[1]

To the last moments of life he must have attended them, and when the tortures were over and the victory won, secretly, probably at night, he must have come to search for the poor despised bodies, tossed out to perish, in order to bear them away to some place of honoured rest. He did it secretly, that he might not be hindered in these services of love, not that he himself might be hidden and might escape. At last this succourer of many was himself arrested

[1] Morone, *Dizionario ecclesiastico*, and Alban Butler.

The usual choice was offered to him of sacrificing to the gods and thus denying Christ ; and then having refused to sacrifice to idols, he was beaten to death with blows of a stick.

Formerly his tomb could be seen in the Via Nomentana. In the Sacramentary of St. Gregory and the Martyrologies of St. Jerome and of Bede his festival is, as in our Calendar, on September 15.

Brief as his biography is, there is not a little in it. Perhaps his name indicates that he, like so many of the first Christians at Rome commemorated in the catacombs, was by birth a Greek. Not a word has come down to us from his lips ; only quiet deeds of reverent lovingkindness, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had rendered of old to the Master. The eyes that searched out the martyred dead for burial had certainly sustained them by faithful sympathy while they still suffered. It was no rash determination to die, no passionate, fanatical self-immolation which caused his martyrdom. His faith was betrayed by his love. It is a happy beginning of our martyrology (taken in the order of the centuries) that the first enrolled on the glorious list was a martyr for charity.

CHAPTER III.

MARTYRS OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

St. Clement

OF ROME.

November 23.

(Martyred, according to general tradition, A.D. 100. Sarum Epistle and Gospel: Phil. iv. 1–3; St. Luke xix. 12–28.)

IT is remarkable that while of Nicomede not one spoken or written word has come down to us, but only the memory of his acts and sufferings, of Clement's life we scarcely know anything except through his writings. Every circumstance recorded of him seems to have been made a subject of contradiction and debate.

By one account he was of pagan descent, from a Roman patrician family. By some he is identified with Clement the fellow-labourer of St. Paul, whose name is in the Epistle to the Philippians, and, as the Apostle says, 'in the Book of Life.' By others he is spoken of as the devoted companion and disciple of St. Peter.

By many it is questioned if he suffered martyrdom at all. In our own Calendar he is not reckoned among the martyrs, nor is anything said of his martyrdom by Eusebius or any earlier writer.

But in the canon of the Roman Mass he is ranked among the martyrs, and in the eighth century a church stood at Rome dedicated in his name, at a time when it is said none but martyrs were thus honoured.

Besides these historical debates about him there is a religious romance, or rather a whole 'Clementine' literature,

founded on his life, and there is also a legend recorded in the sixth century by Gregory of Tours describing his death in the Tauric Chersonese (the Crimea), with the subsequent miracles attending it.

But the very gathering of this literature around him proves the reality and importance of his personality and the weight attached to his name, for at the heart of it are those unquestioned and characteristic writings of his own—the fact that they are included in many ancient MSS. of the New Testament, and were certainly read of old in the Church services—and the fact that the author lived and died at Rome at the close of the first century in a position of honour and responsibility.

Bishop Lightfoot, after weighing the traditions, chiefly from the internal evidence of the epistle, arrives at the conclusion that St. Clement was a man of Jewish parentage, a Hellenistic Jew brought up not on the classics but on the Septuagint Bible, a freedman of Flavius Clemens[1] (the cousin of Domitian, who was undoubtedly martyred for his Christian faith on the charge of atheism and neglect of social and political duties) and Flavia Domitilla, his wife, also a cousin of the Emperor, who after her husband's death was banished to an island in the Mediterranean, to whom belonged the Cœmeterium Domitillæ, in the Tor Marancia, near the Ardeatine Way, unquestionably a Christian catacomb in the second century.

'Is it possible to consider this letter as written by one who had received the education and who occupied the position of Flavius Clemens, who had grown up to manhood, perhaps to middle life, as a heathen, who was imbued with the thoughts and feelings of the Roman noble; who about this very time held the most ancient and honourable office in the State (Roman Consul) in conjunction with the Emperor; who lived in an age of literary dilettanteism and Greek culture; who must have mixed in the same circles with Martial and Statius and Juvenal, with

[1] By some he was identified with the Flavius Clemens, cousin of Domitian.

Tacitus and the younger Pliny, in whose house Quintilian lived as the tutor of his sons, then designated by the Emperor as the future rulers of the world? Would not the style and diction and thoughts, the whole complexion of the letter, have been very different? It might not, perhaps, have been less Christian; but it would certainly have been more classical—at once more Roman and more Greek—and less Jewish than it is.

'The writer, indeed, like the author of the Book of Wisdom, is not without a certain amount of classical culture; but this is more or less superficial. The thoughts and diction are alike moulded on 'the Law and the Prophets.' He is a Hellenist indeed, for he betrays no acquaintance with the Scriptures in the original tongue; but of the Septuagint version his knowledge is very thorough and intimate. It is not confined to any one part, but ranges freely over the whole. He quotes profusely, and sometimes his quotations are obviously made from memory. He is acquainted with traditional interpretations of his text. He teems with words and phrases borrowed from the Greek Bible. His style has caught a strong Hebraistic type. All this points to an author of Jewish or proselyte parentage, who from a child had been reared in the knowledge of this one book.

'Jews were found in large numbers at this time among the slaves and freedmen of the great houses, even of the Imperial palace.

'I venture, therefore, to conjecture that Clement the bishop was a man of Jewish parentage, a freedman or the son of a freedman, belonging to the house of Flavius Clemens, the Emperor's cousin. It is easy to imagine how, under these circumstances, the leaven of Christianity would move upwards from beneath, as it has done in so many other cases; and from their domestics and dependents the master and mistress would learn their perilous lesson in the Gospel. Even a much greater degree of culture than is exhibited in the epistle would be quite consistent with such an origin; for among these freedmen were frequently found the most intelli

gent and cultivated men of their day. Nor is this social status inconsistent with the position of the chief ruler of the most important Church in Christendom. More than a century after Clement the Papal chair was occupied by Callixtus, who had been a slave.'[1]

We may, therefore, picture to ourselves the Rome in which St. Clement lived and wrote as the Rome of the Flavian emperors, Domitian, Vespasian, Titus, and Trajan.

The ruins of Nero's conflagration must have left traces, though, as the great Rebuilder, he had filled up many of the waste spaces. His Golden House by the Palatine, the beautiful Greek statues of which he had ruthlessly rifled the cities of conquered Greece, were adorning Rome. The Palatine, with its stately palaces, thronged with soldiers, with the Imperial Court and with slaves, looked down on the Forum, girt round with temples and basilicas, and across to the Capitol with its diadem of temples.

It was an era of great conflagrations. Five years after the fire of Nero, in the civil war between Vitellius and Vespasian, the great Temple of the Capitoline Jove had caught fire, and blazed up like a sacrificial Ara Cœli to the December sky ; and seven months afterwards the rumour came to the colony of Jews at Rome that the sacred shrine of their law, of which they had deemed the destinies eternal, had been burned to ashes amidst the death agonies of fallen Jerusalem, captured by Vespasian ; to the Jewish colony at Rome a bewildering destruction of sacred hopes, to the Christians a terrible fulfilment.

Along that Sacred Way to the Capitol the Jewish captives had been driven, bound and laden with the sacred vessels of their own desecrated temple, afterwards as captives forced to build the triumphal arch in which their defeat was commemorated, and the Coliseum, where the Christian martyrs suffered.

Emperor after emperor had been slavishly obeyed, more slavishly worshipped, and afterwards ignominiously slain. Twice within ten years the dreadful solitude of despotic

[1] Dr. Lightfoot's *St. Clement of Rome*, Appendix, p. 3.

power had ended in the madness, and then in the murder, of the despot.

Yet through all these tragedies the hundred thousand citizens of crowded Rome, leaving work to the foreign slaves, feasted, and bathed, and criticised, and debated in the stately corridors of the Baths and on the seats of the Amphitheatre.

There was no malaria then on those peopled hills ; and instead of the desolate Campagna a fertile undulating plain, gay with cities and villages and country houses, spread on all sides of the City. Caravans of merchandise came from Ostia, and trains of captives along the great northern roads. Centre of empire and commerce and of conquest, from which all power went forth, to which all wealth flowed back, in the midst of all this activity and idleness and corruption the little Christian community lived and grew ; a little germ of imperishable hope in the midst of this despairing and crumbling world. To this new living youthful society the things that betokened death to others were promises of a new life and dawns of a new era. The burning of the temple on the Capitol [1] might be to them as a beacon promise, prophetic of a true Ara Cœli to be erected over its ruins ; the burning of the Temple of Jerusalem but the scattering of the sacred light and fire, the diffusion of the Shechinah throughout the world.

A little community, scarcely now to be ignored, least of all at Rome, since a husband and wife of the Imperial Family—Flavius Clemens and Domitilla—had been among its martyrs ; in which all ranks and stations were fused into one by the fire of Divine love, since while Domitian's cousin german died for Christ in the palace, Alexamenos, the slave, was being mocked for Him in the slaves' quarters of the Palatine, caricatured gazing up at the Cross, 'Alexamenos is worshipping his God.'

For the most part Greek, many of them of Jewish extraction, their language in their liturgy and in their funeral inscriptions was Greek ; the names inscribed in the cata-

[1] By the soldiers of Vitellius, December 19, A.D. 69. Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology.*

combs are often Hebrew. Yet this little community appears also to have been endued with the ruling faculty of the imperial Roman race and with the worldwide sympathies of the Central City of the world, sending out her words of wise and dignified guidance to the earlier Church of Corinth, not as a daughter to a mother, but rather as a wise mother to a refractory and unwise child, in answer to counsel asked by the child.

All this shines through this epistle 'from the Church of God sojourning at Rome to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth,' which is called in the title added at the close (though never in the text) the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. For the autobiographical interest of the epistle is twofold: it is not only the unconscious autobiography of St. Clement, but of the Church of which he was the leader and representative.

The fact of the persistent recognition of his personality from age to age in spite of the effacement of it in the circular heading of the epistle, combined with the vagueness as to his personal history, seems to imply that this personality was *representative* rather than *exceptional*; gathering into itself and giving out the characteristics of the society around him rather than towering above them on some solitary height.

In reading the epistle we see St. Clement. In seeing St. Clement we see the Roman Church for which he lived. We hear its language, the Greek language of its prayers and hymns; we see its literature. The classical fable of the phœnix rising from its funeral pyre of frankincense and myrrh, and flying to the City and Altar of the Sun, is alluded to as a type of the Resurrection; but not a name of Greek poet or hero occurs throughout, whilst scarcely one of the great names of the Old Testament is absent. Abraham and David are its heroes, the psalms and prophets its poems. The master-key of classical culture is in the hands of the writer, in the language he lisped in infancy. But the sacred stories of his infancy are those of Abraham, Job, David, and Daniel.

As we listen we seem to stand by the twin fountains of

Christian thought. But it is the moral ideal of St. Clement and of that early Roman Church revealed in the epistle which is more than all else to us.

In the first place this comes out of its whole scope and purpose when seen in connection with the circumstances under which it was written.

It is an answer to an appeal for counsel from the Church of Corinth ; and as an explanation for delay in answering it begins with the words, 'By reason of the sudden and repeated calamities and reverses which *are* befalling us.' Only a few years before, two members of the Imperial family of Domitian had suffered for the faith. And, after an allusion to the persecution of Nero it is said, 'We are in the same lists ; the same conflict awaits us.'

In another place, after speaking of the continuity of the sufferings of the saints from Abel to the present, the writer says, 'Unto these men of holy lives are gathered a vast multitude of the elect *among ourselves*, who through many sufferings and tortures, being the victims of jealousy, give a brave example. Matrons and maidens and slave girls being persecuted, after they had suffered cruel and unholy insults' (another version alludes to the tossing by wild bulls, like Dirce), 'safely reached the goal in the race of faith and received a noble reward, feeble though they were in body.'

They were thus evidently in daily peril of the most cruel wrongs and death ; but the peril and the wrong strike from them no note of terror, no word of murmur or retaliation. They are not embittered by their wrongs. The epistle mounts up at the close into a liturgy of intercession for the fallen, the weak, the hungry, and for prisoners ; but also for the rulers and governors who were their oppressors.

They are not bewildered by their own peril ; they are not even occupied with it. After that brief allusion to it, as an excuse for the delay in replying, the whole thought of the writers goes out to the wounds they want to heal. It is no school defending a opinion. It is an universal kingdom caring for every one of its subjects, its compatriots, throughout the world.

It is interesting also to see how the epistle is written from a society of *families* to another society of families; not to a mere religious community or party, a conglomeration of individuals united only by a religious bond. It is no mere creation of an army of conquest detached from the race that is aimed at, but a restored and hallowed humanity; it is to husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, that the letter is addressed.

And this, again, makes the heroism under persecution so much nobler. It is no sullen endurance, no over-strained fanaticism of those who believed human affections forbidden and the joys of human life a barren thing. It was over homes made dear and sacred, as never before, that the peril of the desecration and anguish of persecution hung, and might at any moment fall.

All through, it is the *contrasts* which make the moral ideal so beautiful; it is an interweaving of the richest colour, no mere washing in of neutral tints, that makes its harmony; it is the assertion of the principle of order and obedience as the remedy for the Corinthian divisions by those who were daily asserting the principle of liberty by life and death; the opposition to anarchy of those whose unconquerable freedom of conscience was revolutionising the world.

In other words, the liberty springs from the loyalty, the resistance from the obedience; it is as subjects of the King of kings that they are citizens of the 'Mother City, which is free.'

And again, the social, and moral, and spiritual are inextricably intertwined throughout. The order, the courage, the freedom are based on purity, and truth, and love; and on the two graces so new to the conquering Roman State, humility and patience; the patience not of submission to the inevitable, but of hope; the humility not of servility, but of love. And the moral is rooted deep in the spiritual, the ethics in the theology, the human in the Divine. The source of all is the faith in the supreme goodness of the Father and the Saviour they adore.

'Let us be good one towards another, according to the compassion of Him that made us,' is the keynote.

The patience he exhorts the Corinthians to follow is the patience of the saints of all time—of Elijah and Ezekiel; of 'Peter, who by reason of jealousy endured not one or two but many labours; of Paul, who when he had suffered bonds, and had been stoned, had taught righteousness in all the world, and had borne testimony before kings, went into the Holy Place, being found in patient submission;' of 'the vast multitudes of holy lives, brave examples, *among ourselves*, who have reached the goal.' But the eye of the writer ever looks steadfastly on through the long procession of those patient ones to the patience of Him, the Just One, who beareth our sins, whose sufferings are before our eyes, 'the Sceptre of the majesty of God, even our Lord Jesus Christ, who came not in the pomp of pride, but in lowliness of mind, the pattern given unto us; for if the Lord was thus lowly of mind what should we do, who through him have been brought under the yoke of His grace?'

'Let us hasten to return unto the goal of peace which hath been handed down to us from the beginning, and let us look steadfastly unto the Father and Maker of the whole world; let us behold Him with our mind; let us look with the eyes of our soul into the depths of His long-suffering will; let us note how free from anger He is to all His creatures.

'The heavens are moved by His direction and obey Him in peace; the sun and the moon and the dancing stars, according to His appointment, circle in harmony within the bounds assigned to them. The earth beareth fruit at her proper seasons, putting forth the food that supplieth abundantly both man and beasts and all living things, making no distinction.

'The inscrutable depths of the abysses are constrained by the same ordinances. The basin of the boundless sea, gathered by His workmanship into its reservoirs, passeth not the barriers wherewith it is surrounded; the winds in their several quarters at the proper season fulfil their ministry

without disturbance ; and the ever-flowing fountains, created for enjoyment and health, without fail give their breasts, which sustain the life of man. Yea, the smallest of living things come together in concord and peace. All these things the great Creator and Master of the universe ordered to be in peace and concord, doing good to all things, but far beyond the rest to us who have taken refuge in His compassionate mercies through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the majesty for ever and ever.'

And as to love, it is the same ; he never pauses till the highest Love is reached. Beginning with commendation before proceeding to the necessary rebukes (as the Master in the Epistles to the Seven Churches), he speaks of the magnificent hospitality of the Corinthians, 'their insatiable desire to do good,' their delight to give rather than to receive, 'the practical services of love of those 'who are neighbours to each other, as the good Samaritan was to the wounded stranger ; of their conflict for the brotherhood, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them ; of the stretching out of the hands for forgiveness of the least sin." But the root of all this love is always traced to God and to the sacrifice of Christ.

'Let not the strong neglect the weak,' he says, 'and let the weak respect the strong. Let the rich minister to the poor ; let the poor give thanks to God because He hath given them one through whom their wants may be supplied.' Also, working out the exercise of love into detail :—

'The young are to be modest; elders are to be honoured; women to perform their own duties, to show forth the beauty of purity ; to be gentle, manifesting their moderation through silence . . . . The children are to be partakers of the instruction which is in Christ.' But then again, mounting to the source, 'Who is sufficient to tell the majesty of the beauty of the love of God? The height to which love exalteth is unspeakable. Love joineth us to God ; love covers the multitude of sins ; love endureth all things, is long-suffering in all things. There is nothing coarse, nothing arrogant in love ; love hath no divisions ; love

maketh no seditions ; love doeth all things in concord. In love were all the elect of God made perfect ; without love nothing is well-pleasing to God ; in love the Master took us to Himself ; for the love He hath toward us Jesus Christ our Lord has given His blood for us by the will of God, and His flesh for our flesh, and His life for our lives.' 'You see, dearly beloved, how great and marvellous a thing is love ; and there is no declaring its perfection. All the generations from Adam to Moses have passed away, but they that by God's grace were perfected in love dwell in the abode of the godly.'

Thus this letter stands before us in the midst of all the haze of legend (and also of romance which does not even claim to be legend) which has gathered around it, a solid, unquestioned piece of historical fact. Through all the contradictory voices debating who is this invisible speaker the voice itself reaches us, clear and intelligible across the centuries ; an individual, distinct human voice, not to be confused by those who know it with any other voice, its volume indeed lessened, but its individuality never lost through that long telephone of the eighteen hundred years. No mere impersonal chant of a multitude speaking in unison, but a personal human voice revealing the speaker as well as the things spoken.

It is the entire absence of intentional prominence on the part of the writer, that makes this unintentional translucence of his personality all the more remarkable. Unlike all the epistles canonically included in the New Testament, there is no mention of the writer's name. Even the Epistle to the Hebrews, with its contested authorship, beginning like an impersonal treatise, ends with an 'I beseech you' and 'I will see you.' But in the epistle called St. Clement's not once does the writer use the personal pronoun.

Yet surely we know this Bishop of Rome, this one saint of renown who links our English Calendar with the early Greek ages of the Church, better than many the external details of whose life are familiar to us. Greek in speech,

ST. CLEMENT'S PRAYER ANSWERED.

Facing p. 39.

Jewish in training and sacred patriotic memories, Roman in world-wide sympathy, in love of law and order, and in tact of ruling. If we do not know the circumstances of his life we know its inspirations, what he loved, what he hoped, what he lived for. And if the conjecture that he was a freedman of the Flavian family is true, it is a beautiful prophetic intimation of the great reconcilings of Christianity, that Jew and Gentile, bond and free, should actually be blended in the person of this earliest of the Apostolic Fathers, that this great peace-making bishop of the great imperial city should once have been a slave.

The Legend of the Martyrdom of St. Clement weaves these historical recollections into a touching kind of allegory. It tells us that a fierce persecution of the Christians arose in Rome in the reign of Trajan, and Clement was accused; but many of the people so honoured him for his benevolent and holy life and his kindness to the poor that they wished to save him. When he was brought before the tribunal, Mauritius, the prefect, could find no fault in him and pleaded for him with the Emperor. But Trajan said Clement must sacrifice to the idols, and as nothing would induce him to betray his faith he was banished to the Tauric Chersonese. Mauritius wept when he pronounced the sentence. 'God will not abandon thee,' he said. But Clement was banished to the Crimea, where he found two thousand Christians who had been banished thither before, and were working in the mines. These the good bishop greatly encouraged, so that his exile proved a blessed mission. He found the captives in great distress from want of water, which they had with great toil to bring from ten miles off. He encouraged them to pray for help, and himself knelt down and prayed with them. And as he prayed he lifted up his eyes and saw on a mountain a Lamb which pointed with its right foot to the place of a spring of water. None else saw this lamb, but Clement knew it must be the Lamb of God. At once he went to the spot, stuck his spade into the ground, and an abundant fountain of water gushed

up immediately to satisfy the thirst of this company of Christian confessors. The water of life also flowed forth there through Clement's word from the Eternal Fountain of Life, at the touch of the Lamb of God, and multitudes of heathen believed and were baptised.

The Emperor, indignant at these conversions, sent soldiers to seize the new converts. They yielded themselves joyfully to martyrdom. And at length St. Clement himself was thrown into the sea with an anchor round his neck—that no precious relics might be left for his people to honour. But the Christians prayed that they might yet find the martyred bishop's body. And suddenly the sea retired three miles, and the body of the saint was found in a fine white marble shrine, which the angels had built over it, in the depths of the sea, and beside it the anchor, the instrument of his martyrdom.

And every year afterwards at his festival the sea retired for seven days, that the Christians might worship at his tomb.

Thus it happens that the living fountain and the anchor are the characteristic symbols of St. Clement in sacred Art.[1]

[1] An anchor on the buttons of the beadles and on the weathercock is the device of the parish of St. Clement's in the Strand. There are forty-seven churches dedicated in his name in England. See Mrs. Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art.*

St. Perpetua[1]

OF CARTHAGE.

March 7.

(Martyred 203 A.D. Sarum Epistle and Gospel: 1 Cor. vii. 25–34; St. Matt. xxvi. 1–13.)

It seems best to include in the second century the story of the Carthaginian martyr St. Perpetua, who, though she suffered in the third century, A.D. 203, lived the longer portion of her brief life of twenty-two years in the second.

Not only in date but in character her story forms a link between the early days of the origins and the later times of fuller organisation, and also between Eastern and Western Christendom.

Between the deaths of St. Clement of Rome and Perpetua come the three great martyr stories of St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, and the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, all written by eye-witnesses.

But while the stories of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Blandina are told in Greek, the 'Acts of St. Perpetua, St. Felicitas, and her associates' are in Latin.

It seems well, therefore, to place her thus apart from the great cluster of martyrdoms under Decius and Diocletian in the third century, because while her birth and her mother tongue link her with Latin Christendom, the occasion of her death and the character of her confession seem to associate her rather with earlier days.

The great persecutions of Decius and Diocletian in the third century are named naturally after the emperors who promoted them. They were the last conscious, determined, organised struggles of the central Imperial power, awakened

[1] Sketches of the martyrdoms of St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, and the martyrs of Lyons have been introduced as preparatory to the Acts of Perpetua.

to perceive the imperial and universal claims of the religion with which it had to do.

The persecutions of the second century were local and accidental, the results of outbreaks of personal irritation or of popular jealousy. They arose not at Rome but at Antioch, at Smyrna, at Carthage, or at such colonial cities as Lyons and Vienne, in Gaul.

The persecution which led to the martyrdom of St. Ignatius is said in the ancient story to have arisen out of the impatience of the triumphant Emperor Trajan at encountering in the midst of his victories a small new religious society, which professed allegiance to a Sovereign whose commands were superior to his, and dared to resist his will. It was on his way from victories over the Scythian Dacians and as he pushed on to further conquests over the Armenians and Parthians, that he was thus irritated by the resistance of the little community of the Christians, yet lacking to complete the subjugation of all things to himself; and he threatened them with persecution unless they 'worshipped the dæmons, as did all the nations.'

'Then Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, the noble soldier of Christ, who had piloted his people through the persecution of Domitian and other dangers by the helm of prayer and fasting, by the earnestness of his teaching, and by his constant spiritual labours, was by his own desire confronted with the Emperor.' [1]

It was rather as a voluntary champion of his flock than as a victim he stood forth.

Two desires possessed him, as a good shepherd desiring 'not to lose the faint-hearted and the defenceless, and also himself to enter into a closer relation with his Lord by the confession of martyrdom.' [1]

Ignatius was called Theophorus, a name translated by tradition into a legend that he was the little child borne by Christ in His arms to set before the disciples the example of

[1] Ruinart, *Acta Sincera Martyrum*, pp. 62, 63 (the Greek version).

what they must be to enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but by Ignatius himself, according to ancient story, interpreted to mean not that he was borne, but that he bore the Christ in his heart.

This illuminated moment of conversation between the emperor of the world and the servant of Christ, recorded for us in the contemporary Greek 'Acta,' gives us a wonderfully vivid glimpse into the past.

Trajan: 'Who are those cacodæmons (evil dæmons) hastening to transgress our commands, and persuading others also that they should miserably perish?'

Ignatius: 'No one calls Theophorus an evil dæmon, for all the dæmons have departed from the servants of God; but if indeed I am grievous to these, and if thou callest me evil to the dæmons, this I confess; for having Christ, who is the heavenly King, I do indeed dissolve their devices.'

Trajan: 'And who is this Theophorus?'

Ignatius: 'He who has Christ in his breast.'

Trajan: 'Do we, then, seem to thee to have no gods in our mind, we on whose side the gods fight against our enemies?'

Ignatius said: 'The dæmons of the nations, in an illusion, thou proclaimest to be gods; for there is one God who made man and earth and the sea and all things therein, and one Christ Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, for whose kingdom I am longing.'

Trajan: 'Dost thou speak of Him who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?'

Ignatius: 'I speak of Him who has crucified my sin, with him who devised it, and has put all delusion and evil under the feet of those who bear Him in their hearts.'

Trajan: 'Then thou bearest the Crucified in thy heart?'

Ignatius: 'Yes, for it is written, "I will dwell in them and walk in them."'

Then Trajan answered, 'This Ignatius, who says he bears about within him the Crucified, we command to be taken, bound, by soldiers to Great Rome, to become the prey of wild beasts for festivity to the people.'

Then Ignatius exclaimed with joy, 'I thank Thee, O Supreme Lord, that Thou hast deigned to honour me with the perfecting of love to Thee, permitting me, like thine Apostle Paul, to be bound with chains.'

And so with great eagerness and joy the longing of his heart to suffer for his Redeeming Lord was fulfilled, and Ignatius was carried bound to Rome. On his way he poured out his heart in his Epistle to the Romans. 'Now I begin to be a disciple. Fire and cross, troops of wild beasts, rending of every limb, dire torments of the Devil, let them come to me, if only I may follow Jesus Christ. . . . Living I write to you, longing to die. My Love is crucified. I long for the Bread of God, the Bread of heaven, the Bread of Life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I long for the wine [1] of God, His own blood, which is love incorruptible, and eternal life.'

At last, having reached great Rome, 'and there on his knees called on the Son of God that the persecution might cease, and that the brethren might love one another, he was thrown to the cruel beasts in the amphitheatre; and, as he wished, gave no trouble to the brethren in collecting his relics, for nothing was left but a few hard bones.' 'These they gathered with reverence and many tears; and some that very night in a vision saw the blessed Ignatius praying, whilst others saw him coming forth with the sweat of the travail of his agony on him, and beside him the Lord, sustaining him.'

And having with much joy seen these visions, the brethren then 'sang hymns of praise to God, Giver of all good things, and called the martyr holy and blessed.'

This was at Rome, A.D. 107, on the 20th day of December.

As individual is the story of Polycarp, to whom, while yet in his prime, the martyr Ignatius wrote one of his letters.

[1] (Drink, πόμα θεοῦ) Ruinart, 67.

This almost the earliest of the martyr stories can be read by all in the words of the members of the Church of Smyrna, who saw the venerable bishop die, and 'would gladly each of them have died as he died.'[1]

A local popular tumult seems to have been the occasion of the persecution, intensified by the hatred of the Jews.

No passionate longing to suffer seems to have moved Polycarp or the Church he ruled, but only the quiet determination to do and suffer the will of God. 'We do not commend those who give themselves up,' they write; the one of them who did thus give himself up, they observe, was the one who failed in courage, and denied.

The aged bishop would have stayed in the city to await what might come. It was the wish of the people not to lose him that persuaded him to take refuge in the country house where he was arrested.

The magistrates evidently were more favourable to him than the mob. Among these were some infuriated, apparently, by fear of loss to their religion or their craft, and besides these the Jewish colony, the old hatred from which St. Paul suffered further embittered by the destruction of their Temple.

'This is the master of Asia,' the crowd cried scornfully when he was led into the Stadium, 'the father of the Christians, the enemy of our gods.' And to these Polycarp cried, indignantly retorting their accusation, 'Away with the godless!' and spoke of the 'enduring fire,' so different from the 'transitory flames' to which they condemned him.

At every stage of his trial his dignity and gentleness seem to have touched his enemies.

The soldiers sent to arrest him willingly suffered him to finish his prayer; and for two hours they listened while he stood and prayed; and many repented that they had come forth against so godly and lovable an old man.

The Irenarch and his father took him up in their chariot with all honour, and would have persuaded him there could

[1] Ruinart.

be no harm in sacrificing to the genius of Cæsar. But when their persuasions failed, they pushed the old man down from the chariot, so that he strained his ankle and limped quietly along on foot without a complaint.

Then the Proconsul entreated him to respect his age. 'Swear and denounce the Christ, and I will set thee at liberty,' he said, thus calling forth the tender, loyal answer which has rung through all the ages since.

'*Eight and sixty years have I served Him, and He has done me no injustice. How, then, can I blaspheme my King, who has saved me?*'

When Polycarp asked the Proconsul, if he wished 'to know what Christianity is, to fix a day of public audience, the only reply was that he might "persuade the people."' 'And when he saw that no threats of wild beasts or fire terrified him, but that he was filled with confidence and joy, the Proconsul was astonished, and sent his herald to proclaim three times in the Stadium, "Polycarp has professed himself to be a Christian."'

Thus the feeble, tremulous tones of the old man's confession were taken up by the herald's cry.

The Asiarch refused to yield to the cry of the populace that Polycarp should be given to the lions, the regular games being over, and he was sentenced, as he had foretold, to be burned alive. He submitted gently to all the preparations, only resisting when they would have fixed him with nails to the stake, saying, 'He who gives me to suffer by fire will enable me to stand unmoved by the pyre.'

There also the persecutors waited for him to finish his prayer. As he lifted up his eyes to heaven he said, standing before the pyre, 'Lord God Omnipotent, Father of Thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the knowledge of Thee; God of the angels and the heavens, and of the whole creation, and of all the generations of the just ones who live before Thee, I bless Thee that Thou hast thought me worthy of this day and hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs, and the cup of Thy Christ, unto

the resurrection of eternal life, of soul and body, in the incorruptible life of the Holy Spirit; among whom (Thy martyrs) I desire to be received to-day before Thee, a ripe [fat] and acceptable sacrifice, as Thou hast prepared and foreshown and fulfilled, Thou the true God who canst not lie. Wherefore for all things I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom to Thee and the Holy Spirit be glory now and in the ages to come. Amen.'

And 'after that Amen the men of fire kindled the fire,' and it seemed to those who saw him that the flames formed themselves above his head into a triumphal arch into the heavenly city he was entering, and a fragrance as of Paradise floated round him; that his body shone like silver and gold; and the fire could not burn him, so that the death stroke was given by the executioner; and his blood extinguished the flames, and a dove, gentle as his spirit, came forth thence and flew to heaven. But some of the Jews cried out that the Christians would abandon the Crucified to worship Polycarp, and the unconsumed body was thrown again into the flames. 'For they are ignorant that we are not able to abandon the Christ who suffered for the salvation of all that are saved through the whole world, the Blameless for the sinful; Him, being indeed the Son of God, we worship; but the martyrs as disciples and followers of the Lord we love on account of their surpassing fidelity to Him our King and Master, with whom may it be given to us also to be partakers and fellow disciples.'

So at last the poor scorched bones were taken up and laid up 'as precious treasures dearer than gold.'

'Now the blessed Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the seventh day before the calends of May, on the great Sabbath at the eighth hour, Statius Quadratus being Proconsul; but Jesus Christ being King for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty, and an eternal throne. 'These things Gaius copied from Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, who himself

[1] Ruinart, p. 93.

was intimate with Irenæus ; and Socrates copied it again in Corinth from Gaius. God be with all !'[1]

This was at Smyrna, on the hill above the Mediterranean Sea, A.D. 140.

The next of these earliest martyr stories leads us to the heart of France, to the banks of the Rhone, though the sufferers were many of them also of Asiatic birth, and the letter of the survivors was written in Greek from the Churches of Lyons and Vienne to their brethren in Asia and Phrygia.

Equally local, and apparently accidental, is the persecution, equally genuine the record, but in this instance it is no well-known names of veteran leaders of the flock which shine out most gloriously, but those of a boy of fifteen and a slave girl, Saturus and Blandina.

Their glory is in the mighty grace of God, which enabled the weak to resist, 'like firm and stable columns,' all the assaults of the enemy.

Some indeed of higher degree were among them, and Bishop Pothinus was the first to suffer, being beaten and dragged through the streets without respect for his ninety years.

'But the eyes of all were especially directed to the boy of fifteen, the neophyte Saturus, who endured unutterable tortures for days, and the girl Blandina, racked, scorched, tossed by beasts, and finally fixed to a stake in the amphitheatre, where the brethren, as on this her cross she most contentedly pleaded for them all, beheld in her, stretched in anguish there, with their bodily eyes a visible image of the Crucified Lord, and were sustained as by the sight of Him.

'For with such strength was that feeble one endued that the torturers, succeeding each other from the first light to evening, wondered at her capacity for suffering. But that blessed one, like a noble athlete, drew strength and courage from her own confession, and found refreshment

[1] Ruinart.

and rest, and lost all sense of the present pain, in simply repeating these words: "I am a Christian, and nothing evil is done amongst us."'

The courage of some did indeed fail through those long days of torture; but those who had stood firm through all had not a word of reproach for the lapsed, but only sought tenderly to encourage and restore them, which indeed they did, 'the measureless mercy of Christ shining on them again through the forbearance of those who loved Him.' And as they died, like Stephen, the first martyr, the sufferers prayed for their persecutors.

'So,' the survivors write, 'last of all, as a noble mother, who had inspired her sons to a noble conflict, and sent them victors before her, Blandina herself went by the same path they had trodden, exulting, not as one thrown to the beasts, but as a guest at a marriage feast.'[1]

This was in A.D. 177, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

And as Blandina suffered and overcame, not only did her heroism manifest again the Crucified, for whom she suffered; she proved for all time that a Kingdom, a heavenly City, had come, in which the noblest battles could be won by womanhood and the highest honours might rest on the head of the slave.

'Brave athlete' the brethren call this weak woman; 'noble matron and mother' they felt her to be, this helpless slave girl.

Around the writings of the great martyred bishops Ignatius and Polycarp many controversies have gathered. They, as men building up in order and solidity the kingdom which was to absorb all that was high in Greek culture and Roman law, had, besides their higher conflicts, to wage war also on earthly ground, among things temporal, for law and order, and the great framework of the City of God.

But the lives of women, because of their lowliness and simplicity, sometimes lead us to the deeper sources, the things human and Divine which underlie the things ecclesiastical, the moral and spiritual depths common to all

[1] Ruinart.

lands and ages, common to earth and to heaven, in the kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The roll of the earliest martyrs of this period may therefore well close with the story of that tender and noble Carthaginian woman who is commemorated in our Anglican Calendar.

The Passion of SS Perpetua and Felicitas, with their Companions.[1]

'There were arrested the young catechumens Revocatus and his fellow slave Felicitas, Saturninus and Secundulus; and among these also Vivia (Ubia) Perpetua, honourably born, liberally educated, a freeborn matron, married according to the most honourable rites (*matronaliter nupta*); having a father and a mother and two brothers, one of these a catechumen like herself; and also an infant son at the breast. Her age was about twenty-two. *She herself narrated the whole order of her martyrdom, and left it written by her own hand*, in her own sense and meaning.

'"When," she says, "we were with the persecutors, and my father would persevere in turning me aside and casting me down" [i.e. from the faith] "out of his affection for me, 'Father,' I say, 'thou seest, for example, this vessel lying on the ground, a little pitcher, or whatever else it may be?'

'"And he said, 'I see.'

'"And I said to him, 'Can I call it by any other name than what it is?'

'"And he answered, 'No.'

'"'So also I cannot say of myself that I am anything else but a Christian.'

'"Then my father, moved by that word, cast himself on me as if he would have torn out my eyes, but he only hurt me, and, overcome by the arguments of the devil, he departed. Then when for a few days I had been severed

[1] Translated from Ruinart's *Acta Sincera Martyrum.*

from my father I gave thanks to the Lord and was comforted for his absence.

'"In that interval of a few days we were baptised; and to me the Spirit suggested to ask nothing else in the water save patience to suffer in the flesh.

'"After a few days we were received into the prison, and I was sorely terrified, because never before had I experienced such darkness. O bitter day—from the great heat of the multitudes shut up there, and from the violence of the soldiers! I was also fretting with anxiety for my babe. But then Tertius and Pomponius, the blessed deacons who ministered to us, obtained, for a price, that, for a few hours each day, being sent into a better part of the prison, we might be refreshed. Then going out all together from the prison, they were at leisure and had space by themselves; whilst I could suckle my babe, already weak from want of food. I spoke anxiously about him to my mother and I encouraged my brother, and I committed the little son [to them]. For their sakes I was myself pining away, because I saw them pining away for my sake. From such solicitudes I suffered many days, and at last I prevailed to have my baby with me in the prison; and at once I regained strength and was relieved from the travail of soul and anxiety for the babe, and the prison became to me as a palace, and I had rather be there than anywhere else.

'"Then my brother said to me, 'Lady, my sister, now already thou art in great honour, so great that thou mayest well ask for a vision; it may be shown to thee whether our passion is to be accomplished or whether we shall yet go freely hither and thither again.' And I, who knew that I held converse with the Lord, from whom I had already received so many benefits, fearlessly promised this to him, saying, 'To-morrow I will bring back word to thee.'

'"And I asked, and this thing was shown to me: I see a golden stair of wonderful height reaching up to heaven, and withal so narrow that only one could go up at a time; and in the sides of the stair were inserted all kinds of implements of iron. There were daggers, spears, hooks, swords

[a Greek word], so that if anyone climbed those steps carelessly, or not looking upwards, he would be wounded and his flesh would be left on the iron weapons. And there was beneath that staircase a dragon crouching, of wonderful size, who was always devising traps and stratagems against those who were ascending that stair, and seeking to terrify them, that they might not dare to ascend at all. Saturus ascended first, who was not with us when we were apprehended, but gave himself up freely afterwards; and he reached the top of the stair and turned to me, and said to me, 'Perpetua, I am sustaining thee. But see that that dragon seize thee not.' And I said to him, '*He will not hurt me, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*' And from beneath the stair, as if he feared me, the dragon slowly raised his head; and when I trod the first step, I had trodden on his head; and I went up, and I saw a boundless space of a garden, and in the midst of the garden, sitting, a Man, hoary-headed and tall, in the clothing of a shepherd; great and stately, and He was milking the sheep; and around Him were standing many thousands clothed in white. And He lifted up his head and looked at me and said to me, 'Child [a Greek word], thou art welcome.' And He called me, and of the cheese of the milk He gave me a small mouthful, and I received it with joined hands and ate, and all those who stood around said, 'Amen.' And at the sound of that voice I awoke, still eating something of I know not what sweetness; and I brought back word at once to my brother, and we understood that our passion was to be; and we began to have no hope in this world.

'"After a few days the rumour came that we were to be tried. But my father also arrived from the city, and he came up to me and sought to cast me down, saying, 'Have compassion, my daughter, on my grey hairs: have compassion on thy father, if I am worthy to be called thy father. If, with these hands, I have brought thee up to the flower of thy age, if I have loved thee beyond all thy brothers, give me not to be dishonoured among men. Have regard to thy brothers; consider thy mother and thy mother's

sister; consider thy son, who will not be able to live without thee. Lay aside thy purpose, lest thou destroy us all, for none of us will be able to speak freely if thou shouldst suffer.'

'"These things my father said, in his fatherly affection, kissing my hands and throwing himself at my feet; and with tears he went on calling me not 'child,' but 'lady' and 'mistress.' And I was full of pain, grieved at heart for the grey hairs of my father, who alone of all my kindred would not be able to rejoice in my passion [martyrdom]; and I comforted him, saying, 'On the scaffold (at the tribunal), that will be done which God has willed; for know that we are not placed in our own power, but in God's.' And he departed from me very sorrowful.

'"The next day, while we were at our morning meal, suddenly we were laid hold of, that we might be examined, and we came to the Forum. At once the tidings spread through the neighbourhood of the Forum, and there was an immense gathering of the people. We went up to the tribunal. The others were questioned and made their confession. Then it came to my turn, and my father appeared there with my little son, and he drew me down from the step and said entreatingly, 'Have mercy on thy babe;' and Hilarianus, the prætor, who then, in the place of the proconsul Minucius Timinianus, lately dead, had received the power of the sword, said, 'Spare the grey hairs of thy father; spare the infancy of the boy; make the sacrifice for the Emperor.' And I replied to him, '*I do it not.*' Hilarianus said, 'Art thou a Christian?' and I answered, '*I am a Christian.*' And as my father still stood there to cast me down" [from the faith] "command was given by Hilarianus that he should be cast down and smitten with a rod; and it grieved me that this should happen to my father, as if I had been smitten myself, so was I grieved for his sorrowful old age. Then he sentenced us all together and condemned us to the wild beasts; and rejoicing we descended to the prison.

'"Then, because my babe was wont to take the breast

and to remain with me in the prison, immediately I sent Pomponius, the deacon, to seek the babe; but my father would not give him up, and, as God willed, neither did the child much long for the breast, neither did much suffering ensue to me, that I should be weakened by the longing for the child, and by pain.

'"After a few days, whilst we were all together praying, suddenly in the middle of the prayer a voice came to me, and I uttered the name of *Dinocrates*;[1] and I wondered much, because never had he come into my mind except then, and I mourned, remembering his sufferings; and I recognised immediately that I was considered worthy to pray also for him; and I began to make much prayer for him and to groan for him to the Lord. And continuously through that night he was shown to me in a vision. I see Dinocrates going forth from a place of darkness where many were gathered, oppressed with burning heat and thirsting; his countenance wretched, pallid in hue, and the wound in his face which he had when he died. This Dinocrates was my brother in the flesh, seven years of age, who suffered from a terrible cancer in his face, so that his death was a horror to all men. For him I made supplication; and between me and him there was a great interval [gulf], so that I could not come to him nor he to me. And there was in that place where Dinocrates was a pond full of water; but its edge was too far down for the child to reach, and Dinocrates stretched himself down as if to drink. I grieved because that pool had water, and yet because of the depth of its margin the child could not reach it; and I woke, perceiving how my brother was toiling. But I was confident that my prayer would help his toil, and I prayed for him every day until we went into the prison of the Castle. That was on the birthday of Geta Cæsar, and I prayed for him night and day, groaning and weeping, that he might be given to me.

'"But on the day on which we were kept in fetters this vision was manifested to me. I beheld that place which

[1] Her little brother who had died in childhood.

before I had seen all in darkness now full of light, and Dinocrates, the child, clean and fair in body, clothed in fine raiment, his thirst refreshed; and where the wound had been I saw a scar, and in that pool of water which I had seen out of his reach the boy standing to his waist; and he drew water from it without ceasing; and on its margin was a vessel full of water, and Dinocrates went up to it and began to drink of it, for that vessel failed not nor grew empty. And his thirst assuaged, he went away from that water full of glee to play, as little children are wont; and I awoke. Then I understood that he was translated out of his torment.

'"Then after a few days Pudens, an officer placed over the prison, who began to make much of us, perceiving the great power of God in us, admitted many of the brethren to see us, that we might refresh each other in turn.

'"But when the day of the festival drew nigh my father came in to see me, consumed with grief, and began to tear his beard, and to throw himself on the ground, and to prostrate himself on his face, and to upbraid his age, and to say words which would have moved the heart of any creature. I indeed mourned for his unhappy old age.

'"The day before we were to have our conflict I saw in a vision Pomponius, the deacon, come to the door of the prison and knock vehemently. I went out and opened the door to him. He was clothed in white raiment adorned with a multitude of pomegranates;[1] and he said to me, 'Perpetua, we expect thee: come!' and he took my hand and we began to go by a narrow, winding way. We had scarcely arrived, panting for breath, at the amphitheatre, when he led me into the middle of the arena and said to me, 'Fear not; I am here with thee, and with thee I share the labour.' And he departed. And I beheld around me an immense astonished multitude; and because I knew I was to be given to the wild beasts I wondered that no wild beasts were sent to me. And there came forth a certain

[1] Referring, probably, to the vestments of the High Priest (Ruinart).

Egyptian, foul in face, with his assistants to combat with me ; and there came also to me noble youths to stand on my side and aid me ; and I was unclothed of my womanhood and became as a man; and my friends anointed me with oil, as it is wont to anoint the wrestlers for the conflict ; and on the other hand I saw the Egyptian rolling in the sand.[1] And there came forth a man of marvellous stature, so that he rose above the top of the ampitheatre, having a flowing purple garment, with two keys in the middle of his breast, and a multitude of gold and silver pomegranates, of many forms, bearing a rod like the captain or trainer of the gladiators, and also a green bough, on which were golden apples ; and he demanded silence, and said, 'If this Egyptian overcomes her let him slay her with the sword, but if she overcomes him she shall receive this bough ;' and he retired, and we came to the encounter and began to deal blows. He sought to seize my feet, but I struck him in the face with my heels; and I was lifted up into the air, and began to smite him as if I trampled on the earth. But when I saw a pause in the fight I clasped hands, finger against finger ; and I seized his head and he fell on his face, and I trod on his head ; and the people began to cry out and my friends to sing with joy. And I went up to the captain [*lanista*] and received the bough ; and he kissed me and said to me, 'Daughter, peace be with thee.' And I began to go, with glory, towards the Sanevivarian Gate. And then I awoke ; and I understood that not with the wild beasts but with the Devil my combat was to be ; but I knew that victory was before me. This I did the day before the gladiatorial games ; but when the games are over, if anyone will, let him describe it."

'But the blessed Saturus [Perpetua's brother] also described his vision, which he also wrote : "We had suffered," he said, "and we went forth from the flesh and began to be borne by four angels, whose hands nevertheless touched us not, towards the east. But we went not up-

[1] I.e. the sand with which the wrestlers were sprinkled after being anointed (Ruinart).

wards reclining, but as if we were ascending a gentle slope. And being set free, we saw the primal boundless light; and I said, "Perpetua" (for she was by my side), this is what the Lord promised us; we have received the promise.' And whilst we were still borne onward by those four angels a great space opened around us which was like a green garden, having rose trees in it and all kinds of flowers.

'"But the height of the rose trees was as that of cypresses, and their leaves were falling ceaselessly to the ground. And there, in that green garden, were other four angels, brighter than the first four, who when they saw us paid us honour and said, wondering, to the other angels, 'Lo, they are here! Lo, they are here!' And the other angels who were carrying us were astonished, and set us down; and with our own feet we walked a mile on a broad road. There we found Jocundus and Saturninus and Artaxius, who, suffering in the same persecution, were burned alive; and Quintus, who went forth a martyr from the prison. And we asked them where were the rest; but the angels said to us, 'Come ye first, enter, and salute the Lord.'

'"And we came near to a place of which the walls are as if they were built of light; and before the gate of that place stood four angels who, as we entered, clothed us in white raiment. And we, thus clothed in white, entered in and saw the boundless light, and heard one united voice of those who said continually, 'Holy, Holy, Holy' [in Greek, 'Agios, Agios, Agios,' the great Eucharistic hymn]. And we saw in the midst of that place, sitting, One like a hoary-headed man, having hairs white as snow, and with youth in His face, whose feet we did not see. And on the right hand and on the left stood four-and-twenty elders, and behind them many others.

'"We entered with great wonder, and we stood before the throne. And four angels lifted us up, and we kissed Him, and He passed His hand over our faces. And the other elders said, 'Let us stand.' And we stood and gave the kiss of peace. And the elders said to us, 'Go and play.' And I said, 'Perpetua, thou hast what thou desirest.' And

she said to me, 'Thanks be to God; for whatever gladness I had when in the flesh my gladness is greater now.'

'"And we went forth and saw outside Optatus, the bishop, on the right, and Aspasius, the presbyter, on the left, apart and sad, and they placed themselves at our feet and said to us,[1] 'Keep together with us, for ye are going forth and leaving us behind." And we said to them, 'Art not thou our father, and thou our presbyter? Wherefore do ye place yourselves at our feet?' and we went forward and embraced them. And Perpetua began to talk with them in Greek, and we gathered together in the garden under a rose tree. And whilst we were speaking to them, the angels said to them, 'Let them alone, that they may refresh themselves; and if ye have any dissensions among you dismiss them mutually from among you.' And they reproved them ("conturbaverunt eos"), and they said to Optatus, 'Correct thy people, because they gather to thee thus as if they were returned from the circus and as if they were contending in the factions.'[2]

'"And it seemed to us as if they (the angels) were about to close the gates. And then we began to recognise many brethren, also martyrs. And we were each and all nourished with an unutterable fragrance, which satisfied us. . . . . Then full of joy I awoke."

'These are the famous visions of the most blessed martyrs Saturus and Perpetua, which they wrote together. But God called Secundulus by an earlier departure, whilst still in the prison, not without favour; that he might have the gain of being thrown to the wild beasts without enduring the anguish—a relief to the flesh, if not to the soul.

'But concerning Felicitas (the slave) she was in great grief as the day of the spectacles approached, lest, being pregnant for eight months, for her the day of the conflict should be deferred, because it is not lawful for pregnant women to appear in the amphitheatre, and lest afterwards she should have to shed her innocent blood amongst other common malefactors.

[1] There seems in this vision some echo of divisions in the Church.
[2] Ruinart and Böhringer, *Kirchengeschichte*.

'And her fellow martyrs also mourned sorely with her, lest they should have to leave so dear an associate and companion alone behind, not having attained her hope. And so with one united sigh of supplication they poured forth prayer to the Lord before the third day of the festival. Immediately after the prayer her travail came upon her. And when, with premature labour, she was suffering great anguish, one of the servants who kept the iron gates of the prison said to her, "If thou sufferest thus now, what wilt thou do when thou art thrown to the wild beasts, which thou hadst in such contempt, refusing to sacrifice?" And she answered, "*Now it is I only who suffer what I suffer; then Another will be in me who will suffer for me, because I also shall be suffering for Him.*" So she travailed and brought forth her child, whom a certain sister brought up as her own daughter.

'Since, therefore, the Holy Spirit has permitted, and so permitting has willed, that the order of that festival should be recorded, although unworthy to supplement the story of so great glory, nevertheless as a mandate from the most holy Perpetua, as a trust committed to us by her, we follow up her words, adding this record of her constancy and greatness of soul.

'When they were treated with greater severity by the tribune because he feared, from the warnings of foolish men, lest they should be withdrawn from the prison by magical incantations, Perpetua answered to his face and said, "Why dost thou not permit us, most noble of criminals, belonging forsooth to Cæsar and about to celebrate his birthday by our combat, to have some refreshment ordered? Is it not thy glory if we come forth well fattened for his festival?" The tribune was shocked and blushed, and at once gave orders that they should be treated more humanely, and that their brethren should be allowed free access to them, that same officer Optio (who had been favourable to them) being entrusted with the prison.

'Also on the eve of the games, when that last supper

is given which is called the "free supper,"[1] they held no "free supper," but celebrated indeed, as far as they could, the supper of the Agape. And faithfully they spoke to the people, warning them of the judgment of the Lord, bearing witness to their joy in their sufferings and smiling at the curiosity of the spectators. Saturus said, "To-morrow seems not enough for you that ye may gaze on us at your pleasure and listen to us; to-day friends, to-morrow enemies. Nevertheless observe our faces diligently, that ye may recognise us in the Day of Judgment." And at this all departed thence, astonished; and out of these many believed.

'At length the dawn of their day of victory shone in upon them, and they went forth from the prison to the amphitheatre as to heaven, glad, and with a grave dignity in their countenances; trembling, perhaps, but for joy and not for fear. Perpetua followed with a placid countenance and with a step and bearing as of a matron beloved by the Christ of God; looking down, withdrawing the power (*vigorem*) of her eyes from the gaze of all. So also Felicitas, rejoicing that her babe was born, went forth from her travail to the gladiatorial strife as if to be purified by a second baptism. And when they reached the gate, and were to have been compelled to put on, the men the vestments of priests of Saturn, the women those of the priestesses of Ceres, their noble constancy, faithful to the end, refused to be thus arrayed; for they said, 'Freely we have thus come hither by our own will, lest our liberty should be taken from us. For this we have surrendered our lives, that we might not do such things as this: this compact we have made with you; in this you are in justice bound to yield to us."[2] Injustice itself acknowledged the justice of this; the tribune conceded that they should be simply clad, just as they were. Perpetua sang hymns, already trampling on the

[1] Those who were condemned to the wild beasts the day before the games had a magnificent public supper (Ruinart, from Tertullian).

[2] Some MSS. say Perpetua spoke in the name of the rest (Böhringer).

head of the Egyptian (the Devil). Revocatus, Saturninus, and Saturus warned the people once more as they looked on. When they came in sight of Hilarian they began to speak to him by sign and gesture. "Thou now judgest us," they said, "but God will judge thee." At this the people were exasperated, and demanded that they should run the gauntlet and be scourged. And they exulted in this as a following of the passion of the Lord.

'But He who said "*Ask and ye shall receive*" gave to each that which each had desired. For when they had discoursed together as to their wish how to be martyred, Saturninus said that he desired to be cast out to all the wild beasts, that he might bear away a more glorious crown. And it came to pass in the ordering of the spectacle that he and Revocatus were tested by a leopard, and also on a stage were worried by a bear. Saturus, on the other hand, abhorred nothing more than a bear, but imagined beforehand that he might be demolished by one bite of a leopard. Accordingly when a wild boar was let out, the huntsman who supplied that wild boar was torn and pierced by him, and himself died the day after the games, whilst Saturus was only dragged along by him. And when he was drawn up on the stage to a bear, the bear would not come forth from his den. And thus the second time Saturus was called back unharmed.

'But for the women the Devil had provided a ferocious cow, eager to make them suffer by a creature of their own sex. Accordingly they were unclothed and brought forth wrapped up in the nets. Then the people were horror-stricken, seeing one in the tenderness of her youth, and the other recently a mother. And they were recalled and clothed in loose garments. Perpetua was first brought in: she was tossed and fell on her side; and as she saw her tunic rent from her side she folded it around her, more mindful of modesty than of her pain. After this, finding it needful, she bound together with a clasp her dishevelled hair; for it did not become a martyr to suffer with dishevelled hair, lest she should seem to mourn on her

day of glory as one at a funeral. Then she rose, and when she saw Felicitas lying crushed she went to her and stretched out her hand to her and lifted her up. And both of them stood up, and the hardness of the people was melted and they were recalled to the Sanevivarian Gate. Then Perpetua, being received by a certain catechumen who was devoted to her, and roused, as it were, from sleep (for she had been in the Spirit and in ecstasy), began to look around; and to the amazement of all she said, as if questioning, "I know not when we are to be brought forth to that cow." And when she heard that it was over, at first she did not believe it until she recognised some signs of hurt in her body and in her garments. Then having summoned to her her brother and that catechumen she addressed them and said, "Stand fast in the faith, and all of you love one another, and be not shaken by our sufferings."

'Just so Saturus, her brother, at another gate exhorted the soldier Pudens, saying, "I am here indeed" (present at the roll-call, *adsum*), "as I promised and foretold. Hitherto I have felt nothing from any beast. And now do thou believe with all thy heart. Lo! I shall be *brought forth*, and at one *bite I shall be destroyed by the leopard.*" And immediately, at the end of the spectacle, being thrown to a leopard, with one bite he was so bathed in blood that the people called out to him as he turned back (bearing witness to this second baptism), "Washed and saved! washed and saved!" ("Salvum lotum! salvum lotum!"[1])

'Truly indeed was he saved who shone thus gloriously in that spectacle. Then he said to Pudens the soldier, "*Farewell (Vale); and remember my faith, and let not those things move thee, but confirm thee.*" And at the same time he took the ring from his finger, and dipping it in his own wound,

[1] 'The cry of the people mocking the Christian sacred rites. It was known to the populace that the Christians believed men to be saved through baptism, and thus the people seeing, from the theatre, a Christian bathed in blood, proclaimed him "saved," who was thus washed or baptised' (Ruinart).

restored it to him, leaving to him the inheritance of that pledge and the memory of his blood. Then fainting away, he was laid with the rest in the usual place where the final stroke is given. And when the people demanded them to be set in the midst, that as the sword pierced their bodies they might with their own eyes, as it were, be accomplices of the murder, they rose up spontaneously and went whithersoever the people would; but first they kissed each other, that their martyrdom might be consummated with the kiss of peace. The rest indeed immovable and in silence accepted the sword. But Saturus did much more, who both was the first to ascend the stair and the first to yield up his spirit. He also upheld Perpetua. But Perpetua, that she also might taste something of pain, cried out when her side was pierced by the sword, and she herself guided the erring right hand of the inexperienced gladiator against her throat. Perhaps such a woman could not otherwise be slain, because she was feared by the impure spirit and could not be slain unless she willed it.

'O most strong and most blessed martyrs! O truly called and elected to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ! which glory whosoever magnifies and honours and adores ought to read these not less than the earlier examples given for the edification of the Church, since these new manifestations of power bear witness that One and the Same Holy Spirit is ever working, even until now, with the Omnipotent God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom belong brightness of glory and boundless might for ever and ever. Amen.'

We may well rejoice that this sacred story of Perpetua is embalmed in our Calendar.

So natural, so supernatural, so childlike, so sisterly, so motherly, so matronly, how well we seem to know her through those few days illuminated by her own writing! The delight of her father's heart, the friend and scarcely yet having ceased to be the playmate of her young brother! In his vision Perpetua is by his side; the celestial elders

say to them both, 'Go and play,' whilst she speaks of the gladness she had on earth and the greater gladness now.

She shrank, like any girl cherished in a loving and luxurious home, from the darkness of the prison, its stifling heat, and the discourtesy of the soldiers, though the prison became like a palace when her little son was left with her there; and yet there was a matronly majesty about her which made the tribune blush with shame when she remonstrated with him on the harshness with which they were treated, and spoke with a high spirit and a fine scorn of the meanness of the additional insults heaped on them; and at the same time there was in her a glowing ardour of devotion which made those who knew her expect that especial visions would be vouchsafed to her.

Not a touch of self-pity; but for the bereaved old age of her father an anguish of compassion. Tossed and gored, and thrown wounded on the ground of the arena, she rose again, calm as in her own chamber, to arrange her dishevelled hair, lest she should seem to be a mourner at the festival of her own martyrdom; and when at her first glance around she saw her fellow sufferer the slave Felicitas lying helpless near, she went and took her hand and lifted her up. The simplicity and gladness, the dignity and calm, the mystic fervour, with the quiet, truthful seeing and speaking of things as they are, we see them all! We see even the 'vigour,' the vivid power of the eyes which she cast down on her way to the amphitheatre.

Whatever else her visions reveal they reveal Perpetua; her sympathy for the little brother thirsting for the living water he cannot reach, the fervour of intercession with which she wins it for him; the putting off as a robe of the womanhood of that most tender woman's heart in her combat with the enemy.

And through all, not apart as rival and contending forces, but pervading and glowing through all, through the Roman matron's dignity, through the child's and mother's tenderness, through the gladness and the anguish, always that supreme, all-pervading, all-mastering passion of loyal

love to Christ which made her go forth to the wild beasts, as to heaven, with the bearing and the step of a *matrona dilecta Christi Dei.*

In the vivid record of those few days of Perpetua's life in her own handwriting the whole of the little group around her seem to live and speak and weep and smile. We hear the very tone of their voices. So real is the story, so beautiful, so abounding in individuality of life, that no legend has been able to gather around it, to melt all into a colourless halo. Art itself has had to let her alone. But it is good to have a right to commemorate as the sacred name of one of our beloved taken from our home in all the freshness and glow of youth, the young matron and mother Vivia Perpetua, martyred for Christ at Carthage A.D. 203. Hers is the last of those individual contemporary stories belonging essentially to the second century.

With Ignatius, whose writings are so full of order and discipline, like a general of a great National Army of Liberation, who knows how the freedom of all is depending on the order and obedience of the few who are to fight for the whole, the two sides of his character, as is so often the case, seem represented respectively in his life and in his writings. He shows himself at once the champion of order and the daring herald of individual freedom of conscience and thought, confronting the emperor of the world with fearless courage because of his enthusiasm of loyalty to the crucified King whom he bore in his heart, which made him passionately long to confess Him by the martyr's death.

Polycarp, on the other hand, stands quietly with the calm of his eighty-six years, awaiting the will of God whether to live or die, moving the rulers by his dignity, and encountering the fury of the mob with a spirit as lofty as that with which Ignatius met the emperor.

Blandina, the slave girl, from her stake sustains the courage of all sufferers as a 'noble mother' and a 'brave athlete,' acknowledged as the leader of the martyr band at Lyons. And lastly the young matron Perpetua encourages her friends and kindred in the prison and in the amphi-

theatre. All are so different and yet so alike. It is the common inspiration breathing through all the varieties of character and circumstance which makes these stories so inspiring, the personal devotion to the crucified Redeemer and King.

For the Christ crucified under Pontius Pilate, who had also crucified and nailed to the Cross his sins, 'the' Christ 'borne in his heart,' Ignatius Theophorus went with eager joy across land and sea to be thrown to the wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatre.

'*Polycarp confesses himself a Christian*' rang out through the stadium at Smyrna in the thrice-repeated proclamation of the herald as he went to stand unbound and erect at the stake, full of confidence and joy.

Blandina found food and refreshment and renewal of strength through all her prolonged tortures in the joy of confessing again and again, 'I am a *Christian*, and among us nothing evil is done.'

At Autun, A.D. 180, the young Symphorian, whom his mother encouraged to die, saying, 'My son, born to-day to heavenly life,' answered with exultation to his judges, 'I am *called* Symphorian. *I am* a Christian.'

Perpetua *could not* say she was not what in her deepest being she was, '*a Christian.*'

For Christ, 'known and tried through the eighty-six years,' Christ crucified, Redeemer, Lord, Son of God, coming to judge the world; for Christ by their side, in their hearts, Source of all goodness and strength, these Christians died. And so dying for Him they brought to the world for which He died order and freedom; the largest liberty for the development of all individual life; the recognition of the unity of humanity; the breaking down of all barriers that *divide* nations, or class, or sex, the intensifying of all the individual ideals that *distinguish*; supplementing the needs of each with the gifts of all. They brought order, liberty, unity to the world, a new ideal, for each man and woman, and for the whole. Yet it was not for order, or liberty, or unity they died, or merely for any lofty ideal of humanity,

but simply for the love of Christ their Lord. They serve all humanity through their devotion to the Son of Man, the Second Man, the Lord from heaven. Ignatius is more essentially Ignatius, Polycarp Polycarp, Perpetua Perpetua, for being Christian ; but it is in Christ that their own true individual life is developed ; it is as Christians they have strength to die.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THIRD CENTURY.

We approach the era of the systematic persecutions ; when the Roman Empire had waked up to the might of the Kingdom which had been silently growing up within it and undermining it by the simple force of life. Once more it is an Emperor who leads the attack, but not now, like Nero, the tyrant in chase of helpless prey, nor even the ruler of the world gathering his strength to crush the society which disputed with him the universal empire. Decius seems rather to have assailed the Church on the grounds which made him revive the censorship, than as the military chief. He was determined to stem the corruption of morals which he saw was sapping the life of Rome, and as a means to this end, in his brief reign of two years, he re-established the office of censor in the city, and sought to revive the religious sanctions of morals, which he believed to be the ancient reverence of the gods. The Christians probably appeared to him enemies of the State, because of their contempt for the ancient religious order of the State.[1]

The cruelties of his persecution seem to have arisen not in the first place from intentional ferocity, but from the determination at any cost to vanquish the resistance of the victims, in an age and a society terribly inured to spectacles of bloodshed and torture. All the practical lessons of history are lost if we represent the enemies of the best as

[1] Eusebius speaks of him as a monster of wickedness, but, as in so many other cases, it seems to have been fear of the ruin of what he knew to be good that made him the enemy of the better which he knew not.

monsters. They are so often only the lovers of the second best. From the Decian persecution three martyrs are enrolled in our Calendar—Fabian, Laurence, and Agatha—and we may include St. Cyprian, virtually suffering in consequence of it, although his actual martyrdom occurred under Valerian.

St. Fabian, Bishop and Martyr[1]

OF ROME.

January 20.

(Chosen Bishop of Rome A.D. 236, martyred A.D. 250. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Heb. xi. 33–39 ; St. Luke vi. 17–23.)

Fabian was contemporary with the emperors Maximin, Philip the Arabian, Gordian, and Decius. Gordian by his marriage with Fabia Orestilla had entered that great House of the Fabii of which Fabian was a member.

'Fabian, Roman in origin, was the son of Fabius. It is said that Fabian had come to Rome with some others from the country just after the death of Anteros, the bishop, and there, in the most remarkable manner, by Divine and celestial grace, was advanced to be one of the candidates for the vacant office. When all the brethren had assembled in the church (in the catacombs) for the purpose of ordaining him that should succeed Anteros in the episcopate, though there were many eminent and illustrious men in the estimation of many, Fabian being present, no one thought of any other man.

'It is related further that a dove, suddenly flying down from above (through one of the openings—*lucernaria*—of the catacombs), sate upon his head, recalling the scene of the Holy Spirit descending upon our Saviour in the form of a dove (on the banks of the Jordan).

'Upon this the whole body exclaimed, in all eagerness and with one voice, as if moved by the Spirit of God, "He is worthy," and without delay they took him and placed him on the episcopal throne. He was the first elected as a simple layman to be raised to the summit of the hierarchy.'

Cyprian, writing to Fabian's clergy after his death, speaks of the 'glorious departure of the good man his colleague,' and the Roman clergy lament the want of a

[1] In all the Calendars associated with St. Sebastian.

bishop to control all things in times of difficulty, and to treat the Lapsed with authority and wisdom, 'since the departure of Fabian, of most noble memory.' He assigned to each of the seven districts of Christian Rome a deacon, and placed under them also seven sub-deacons to direct the notaries previously appointed by St. Clement, charged with collecting the Acts of the Martyrs and completing the arrangements originally made by St. Clement. By his orders numerous constructions were made in the cemeteries and galleries of the catacombs. He brought from Sardinia the body of his predecessor Pontianus, and buried it in the Catacomb of Calixtus, in the Appian Way. There was a tradition that he baptised the Emperor Philip the Arabian ; there is also another tradition of his having founded, by missions in Gaul, the seven Churches of Toulouse, Arles, Tours, Paris, Narbonne, Clermont, and Limoges (sending amongst other missionaries St. Denys to Paris) ; but this also is not insisted on as historical.

His martyrdom (though many of the early Bishops of Rome are in the martyrologies) is, it is said, the first really authenticated of a Roman bishop. The sub-deacon Crementius was sent to Carthage with a letter relating his sufferings in detail. This letter has perished, and all we know now is the fact of his being beheaded under Decius at Rome, January 20, 250, the first victim of the Decian persecution, dearly loved and honoured by his flock. His epitaph, in Greek, is in the Catacomb of Calixtus, in the Appian Way :

FABIANOC+EΠΙ+MP.[1]

Thus, though the facts recorded of him may have to do chiefly with external things, the character which lies underneath—which made it seem no strange thing that the dove-like Divine Spirit should rest upon him, bearing witness to him, the simple layman, as fittest for the highest office —which made Cyprian and his own clergy feel that when he

[1] The MP, for 'martyr,' is less deeply graven in the stone, and is supposed to have been added afterwards.

fell, no other man could be found to deal with the 'authority and wisdom' which he had shown towards the Lapsed, seems essentially that of the true Priest and Good Shepherd, able to restore the fallen, not because He has Himself fallen beneath temptation, but because He has felt the temptation and yet not fallen.[1]

[1] Represented as Pope; at a block, kneeling; with dove, sword, or club.

St. Cyprian (Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus),

OF CARTHAGE.

September 26.

(Martyred A.D. 258. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: Wisdom v. 15–19; St. Matt. x. 23–25.)

In all the Calendars the life and work of Cyprian link in so naturally with the story of his contemporary Fabian of Rome that it seems best to place him next in order, although his actual martyrdom took place not under Decius but Valerius.

It is remarkable that three out of the brief roll of saints in our Calendar lived and died on that northern shore of Africa so long since swept bare of Christianity and civilisation by Mahomedan fanaticism and Turkish misrule. After Perpetua, Cyprian, and Augustine, the next vivid page of Christian history associated with North Africa is the story of the capture of St. Vincent de Paul, in the seventeenth century, by the Barbary corsairs.

Of Cyprian's life the only portion really brought into light for us are the ten years between his conversion to Christianity and his martyrdom. For these we have his own letters and treatises,[1] his 'Life and Passion,' by his deacon Pontius, and the 'Acta Proconsularia' of his martyrdom.[2]

His letters are not familiar letters like many of those of St. Ambrose, speaking naturally of his own life and family, or letters of spiritual counsel, like those of St. Jerome, revealing the counsellor's heart in the counsel; they are rather the despatches and orders of a general. There is no allusion in them to father, mother, or kindred, not from any ascetic crushing of natural affections, but because he was, before all things, during those ten years which we see of his life, a bishop and shepherd of the flock. They were years of

[1] *Writings of Cyprian*, translated by Rev. Robert Ernest Wallis, Ante-Nicene Christian Library.

[2] Ruinart, *Acta Sincera Martyrum*.

war and pestilence, of frequently recurring persecution and of difficulties brought on by lapses and weaknesses during the persecutions. The whole natural tenderness of his heart went out to the martyrs, to the confessors, to the plague-stricken, the poor, the captives, the lapsed and fallen ; these were his kindred and family. All the patriotism and loyalty of his character were spent in expanding and consolidating the Kingdom of Christ ; this was his fatherland.

The unity of the City of God was his passion, and yet never unity at the expense of truth and holiness ; if he erred, it was in severity on the side of what seemed to him the cause of holiness and truth.

His history begins for us, as his deacon and biographer, Pontius, says, 'with his heavenly birth.'

He was forty-six years of age when the aged presbyter Cæcilius found him and led him to the Christian faith. 'This man he loved with entire honour and all observance, regarding him with an obedient veneration, not only as the friend and comrade of his soul, but as the parent of his new life.' And Cæcilius, on his part, dearly loved Cyprian, and when he was dying confided to him the care of his wife and children. That he could inspire devoted affection is shown by the story of his life and passion by his deacon Pontius, whose heart can be felt through all the draperies of his rhetoric full of a love to which it would have been easier indeed to die with his bishop than to live without him.

His earlier friendships were not broken off by his conversion. To the day of his martyrdom the friends of his earlier years, still pagan, clung around him and sought to save him.

Cypriote in origin, his family were of high standing in the African province in which they had settled ; he inherited lands and beautiful gardens along those fertile shores ; he was also a trained rhetorician and a professor of philosophy.

There were a high-bred authority and dignity about him; his countenance was 'grave and joyous.'

In dress, and speech, and bearing, and mode of living he disliked exaggeration and eccentricity, though he could

appreciate the force of character or genius which led to eccentricity. He would not, as a Christian, assume the 'philosopher's pall,' though Tertullian, whom he called his 'master,' approved of it. If the tropical fire, the vehement rush, the original imagery, the fine incisive point of Tertullian are not in his writings, there are in them a grace and gentleness, a dignity and moderation equally individual and perhaps as rare.

His own account of his conversion and baptism in a letter to Donatus is full of instruction. Christian influence must have been around him before it definitely reached him.

'While I was still lying in darkness and gloomy night, wavering hither and thither, tossed about on the foam of this boastful age, and uncertain of my wandering steps, knowing nothing of my real life, and remote from truth and light, I used to regard it as a difficult matter, and especially as difficult in respect of my character at that time, that a man should be capable of being born again—a truth which the Divine mercy had announced for my salvation—and that a man quickened to a new life in the laver of saving water should be able to put off what he had previously been, and although retaining all his bodily structure should be himself changed in heart and soul. "How," said I, "is such a conversion possible, that there should be a sudden and rapid divestment of all which, either innate in us has hardened in the corruption of our material nature, or acquired by us has become inveterate by long-accustomed use? These things have become deeply and radically ingrained within us. When does he learn thrift who has been used to liberal banquets and sumptuous feasts? And he who has been glittering in gold and purple, and has been celebrated for his costly attire, when does he reduce himself to ordinary and simple clothing? One who has felt the charm of the fasces and of civic honours shrinks from becoming a mere private and inglorious citizen. The man who is attended by crowds of clients and dignified by the numerous association of an officious train regards it

as a punishment when he is alone. It is inevitable, as it ever has been, that the love of wine should entice, pride inflate, anger inflame, covetousness disquiet, cruelty stimulate, ambition delight, lust hasten to ruin, with allurements that will not let go their hold.'

'These were my frequent thoughts. For as I myself was held in bonds by the innumerable errors of my previous life, from which I did not believe that I could by possibility be delivered, so I was disposed to acquiesce in my clinging vices; and because I despaired of better things I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually parts of me and indigenous to me. But after that, by the help of the water of new birth, the stain of former years had been washed away, and a light from above, serene and pure, had been infused into my reconciled heart; after that, by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth had restored me to a new man, then in a wondrous manner doubtful things at once began to assure themselves to me, hidden things to be revealed, dark things to be enlightened; what before had seemed difficult began to suggest a means of accomplishment, what had been thought impossible to be capable of being achieved; so that I was enabled to acknowledge that what previously, being born of the flesh, had been living in the practice of sins, was of the earth, earthly, but had now begun to be of God and was animated by the Spirit of Holiness. . . . All our power is of God; I say, of God. From Him we have life, from Him we have strength. Only let fear be the keeper of innocence, that the Lord, who of His mercy has flowed into our hearts, in the access of celestial grace, may be kept by righteous submissiveness in the hostelry of a grateful mind, that the assurance we have gained may not beget carelessness and so the old enemy creep upon us again.

'But if you keep to the way of innocence, the way of righteousness; if you walk with a firm and steady step; if, depending on God with your whole strength and with your whole heart, you only *be* what you have begun to be, liberty and power to do is given you in proportion to the increase

of your spiritual grace. For there is not, as is the case with earthly benefits, any measure or stint in the dispensing of the heavenly gift. The Spirit freely flowing forth is restrained by no limits, is checked by no closed barriers within certain bounded spaces; it flows perpetually, it is exuberant in its affluence. Let our heart only be athirst, and be ready to receive: in the degree in which we bring to it a capacious faith, in that measure we draw from it an overflowing grace.'

The keynote of the life is evidently struck here. Even before his conversion to Christianity it was power to overcome sin of which he felt the need; it was new life, it was holiness for which he longed.

He set himself from the beginning of his Christian life to aim at its highest ideal, and this at a time when the Church around him had grown in some measure cold and feeble through thirty years of peace. And all through it was the same. His love for the Church was for the 'Spotless Spouse,' the 'Holy Mother,' the ideal saintly society.

The strictest purity of life was to him identical with Christianity, and at once he recognised the law of brotherhood by selling his beautiful gardens and two of his estates to distribute among the poor.

His love for the garden he sold (afterwards bought back for him by the Church) is shown in his description of it in the letter to Donatus. 'This vintage festival invites the mind to unbend in repose. Moreover the place is in accord with the season, and the pleasant aspect of the gardens harmonises with the gentle breezes of a mild autumn, in soothing and cheering the senses. In such a place as this it is delightful to pass the day in discourse. That no unrestrained clatter of a noisy household may disturb our converse, let us seek this bower; the neighbouring thickets secure us solitude, and the trailings of the vine branches, creeping in pendent mazes among the reeds that support them, have made for us a porch of vines, a leafy shelter.'

'His house,' Pontius says, 'was open to every comer. No widow returned from him with an empty lap; no blind

man was unguided by him as a companion ; none faltering in step was unsupported by him as a staff ; none stripped of help by the hand of the mighty was not protected by him as a defender."

'Such things ought they to do,' he was wont to say, 'who desire to please God.' A revelation surely of countless quiet acts of kindness in the streets or quiet paths among the vineyards, and in the home, from one who walked day by day by his side.

He had not long been baptised when the Bishop of Carthage died, and the general appreciation of his character was shown by the people crowding round his house, and, though he desired to give place to older men, vehemently insisting on his becoming their bishop.

Some jealousy was felt by a few of the presbyters at his election, but by degrees he won most of those who had resisted ; and soon came the fierce test of persecution to prove how true and faithful a leader had been chosen in this wise and gracious man.

Four years after his conversion the Decian persecution broke on the Church throughout the Empire. It soon reached Carthage. The assault was systematically planned. Five commissioners were to sit in every town, and the proconsul was to go on circuit giving judgment. The object was to induce the Christians to deny Christ by open assault, by scourges, racks, wild beasts, and also by subtle wiles, by which many were deceived. A few grains of incense on a shrine of what was really 'nothing at all,' or even a purchase of false certificates that sacrifice had been offered when it had not—and all could be escaped ! And hundreds, thousands (in one bitter moment ; Cyprian even says, 'the majority') did deny and escape.

Some even rushed to sacrifice at the pagan altars, anticipating their arrest ; many of the bishops and clergy lapsed ; for the Christians had begun to grow cold and to live at ease. The luxurious life of that delicious climate, the licentiousness of that corrupt society had invaded the Church ; and in too many instances the persecution only revealed a lapse

into heathenism, and even into the lower depths of heathenism, already begun.

Cyprian was proscribed by the State. The persecution was especially directed against the chiefs of the Church; and his blood was also demanded by the populace of Carthage. 'The bishop to the lions!' was their cry.

He retired into concealment in a place within reach. Deliberately, knowing what calumny might say, and did say, of his flight, he chose *not* to forsake his people by a death which afterwards he proved convincingly he did not fear, but to cleave to them; that so from his hidden post of observation he might be able to direct their movements, to encourage the combatants, to recall the stragglers, to guard against the too easy restoration to posts of trust of those who had proved cowards,—and at the same time to restrain the unforgiving severity of some who had themselves stood firm.

From his retirement Cyprian guided the policy of the whole West upon the tremendous questions of Church communion which now arose.

To comprehend the value of such combined moderation and firmness as he showed, and helped to make prevail, we must remember that the treatment of the lapsed at that time was no question of technical arrangement of detail; it concerned the consolidation, and therefore the very existence, of a community beleaguered on all sides by the enemy, and endangered by treachery within, by the laxity of those who had fallen, and also by the pride of those who had held their ground.

There was a positive danger in those days of the martyrs becoming dictators or rulers of the Church, although the enthusiasm which enabled them to suffer by no means necessarily implied the calmness and wisdom which would fit them to be guides of the community. Cyprian's letters must be studied as a whole to see fully how he honoured the martyrs and confessors, without weakly yielding to their judgment; and what fatherly severity was blended with tenderness in his treatment of the lapsed.

'With what praise can I commend you, most courageous brethren,' he writes to the confessors at Carthage in the Decian persecution, 'the strength of your hearts and the perseverance of your faith! The multitude saw with admiration the manly contest, the battle of Christ, saw that His servants stood with free voice, with unyielding mind, bare indeed of weapons of this world, but armed with the weapons of faith. Beaten and torn, they overcame; the scourge, often repeated, could not conquer. What a spectacle was that to the Lord, how acceptable the allegiance and devotion of His soldiery! He was present at His own contest. He animated the champions of His name. He who once conquered death on our behalf always conquers it in us. He Himself also, in our conflict, not only crowns but is crowned.' Then, to encourage those not called to martyrdom, he adds, 'Nor let any one of you be saddened as if he were inferior to those who have suffered tortures. The Lord is the Searcher of hearts. O blessed Church of ours which the honour of the Divine condescension illuminates! She was white, before, in the works of the brethren; now she has become purple, in the blood of the martyrs. Among her flowers are roses and lilies. 'Now let each one strive for crowns, white as of labour, or purple as of suffering. In the heavenly camp both peace and strife have their flowers, with which the soldiers of Christ may be crowned for glory.' And again, speaking of those who had suffered least, 'As far as they could,' he writes, 'they bore whatever they were prepared and equipped to bear.'

Again and again he entreats those who are free, to manifest all care and honour for those who are kept in prison, and sends money to help. And of the martyrs he writes, 'Let us take note of the day on which they depart, that we may celebrate the commemoration.' Yet on the other hand he warns the Confessors that their having borne witness for Christ does not save them from the future temptation of the enemy, but renders them more exposed to his hatred and seductions; he points out that some of those who had faith-

fully confessed had afterwards fallen into open sin; and faithfully he warns them to be on their guard.

Most precious are these words of warning from one of the martyrs, as to confession or martyrdom in itself being no safeguard from temptation. It is like a vision straight into the heart of the fiery furnace, and a voice from the midst of the fire saying that even there the purifying power comes, not from the fire, but from the Son of God walking within it beside His faithful ones.

And with regard to the lapsed, while he blames their *demanding* to be received again, he tenderly excepts 'some who have lately written to me, who are of the lapsed, but who are meek and humble and fearing God.'

Again, to the presbyters and deacons, guarding against a too hasty restoration to communion, he writes, 'The wounded and unhealthy mind of the lapsed suffers what those who are bodily diseased often suffer; so that while they refuse wholesome food and beneficial drink as bitter and distasteful, they crave those things which are sweet for the present, thereby inviting to themselves mischief and death.'

And again, on the other hand, to the Novatianist confessors, who would have refused remission to the lapsed, he writes these golden words (said to be three times cited by St. Augustine[1]), congratulating them on their return from schism: 'For although there seem to be tares in the Church, yet neither our faith nor our charity ought to be hindered, as if because we see there are tares in the Church we ought to withdraw from the Church. We ought only to labour that *we* may be wheat, that when the wheat shall begin to be gathered into the Lord's barns we may receive fruit for our labour and work. The Apostle in his epistle says, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour." Let us strive, dearest brethren, and labour as much as we possibly can that we may be vessels of gold or silver. But to the Lord alone it is granted to break the

[1] Dr. Benson (Archbishop of Canterbury), Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

vessels of earth, to Whom also is given the rod of iron. The servant cannot be greater than his lord, nor may anyone claim to himself what the Father has given to the Son alone, so as to think that he can take the fan for winnowing and purging the threshing-floor, or can separate by human judgment all the tares from the wheat.'

Greatly, it is said, through the influence of Cyprian's words and character, the decision arrived at by the Council of Carthage and accepted by the whole Church with regard to the lapsed, was that 'the intercession and merits of the martyrs as affecting the conditions of restoration are set aside; whilst, on the other hand (as against Novatian), no offences are to be considered beyond the regular power of the whole Church to remit.[1]

Throughout this difficult navigation it is most interesting to see the Churches of Rome and Carthage in constant consultation, the Roman clergy appealing to Carthage and Cyprian for counsel, during the interval after the martyrdom of Fabian; and Fabian's successor Cornelius and Cyprian working together for mercy and justice.

In another controversy which occupies a large portion of Cyprian's letters, Cyprian and the African episcopate arrived at a decision different from that of Rome, which was subsequently annulled by the decision of the Church.

In all ecclesiastical history there is scarcely anything more interesting than the manifestation through this controversy how the insight of the whole Church proved truer than that of any section of it, and the heart of the Church penetrated deeper than the intellect of the wisest of her sons.

This was the controversy about the rebaptising of heretics. The Churches of Asia Minor and of Africa decided—at least their official heads decided—that the baptism of heretics was void. And Cyprian writes most strongly on the subject. It was no doubt his horror of division and love of consolidated unity which led him to this conclusion.

It must be remembered he was always acting in presence of the enemy. Stephen of Rome, with the harsher temper, came to the gentler decision, which was ultimately

[1] Dr. Benson, Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

followed by the whole Church, on the ground that 'the grace of baptism is of Christ and not of the human baptiser.' The Council of Carthage was unanimous in following Cyprian.

'The unanimity of such early councils, and their erroneousness, are a remarkable monition. Not pushed; not pressed; the question broad; no attack on an individual; only a principle sought; the assembly representative; each bishop the elect of his flock, and all 'men of the world' often christianised, generally ordained late in life; converted against their interests by conviction formed in an age of freest discussion; their chief (Cyprian) one in whom was rarely blended intellectual and political ability, with holiness, sweetness, and self-discipline. The conclusion reached by such an assembly uncharitable, unscriptural, uncatholic—and unanimous.

'The consolation as strange as the disappointment. The mischief silently and perfectly healed by the simple working of the Christian society. Life corrected the error of thought.'

'It may be noted, as affording some clue to these one-sided decisions, that the laity were silent in the council. It was a parliament of officials, of provincial governors. It must have been among the laity that there were in existence, and at work, those very principles which so soon not only rose to the surface, but overpowered the voices of the bishops for the general good.' [1]

We return to the story of Cyprian, as told in his letters and his 'Passion,' by Pontius.

Yet it is not difficult to see how Cyprian, in his passion of patriotism for the Church, for his heavenly fatherland—the city of his heavenly birth and of his King—regarding the heretics as deserters and the schismatics as traitors (and that in presence of a besieging enemy), would find it impossible to recognise any religious act of theirs as other than the continuance of disloyalty.

It is pleasant to turn from this campaign, in which

[1] Dr. Benson, Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

the Church of Rome at the time, and the whole Church afterwards, decided against him, to his direction of his Carthaginian flock in the perpetual Christian work of mercy.

He himself, we must remember, in an age of almost fanatical homage to the martyrs, wrote that the 'white rose of the crown for faithful labour might be as fair as the red rose of martyrdom;' and to such labour he led the African Church, going always before his flock as an example both in giving and suffering.

The Berbers, native African tribes, untouched by Christianity or civilisation, began to press in on the little rim of light of the African province. They advanced their frontier steadily during the next few years and reconquered much territory.

In a raid made during the session of the Council of Carthage which discussed the rebaptisation of heretics, these Berbers carried away a great number of Christians from eight of the African sees. The bishops appealed to Cyprian, and he writes—

'Christ is to be contemplated in our captive brethren; and He is to be redeemed from the peril of captivity who redeemed us from the peril of death; He is to be rescued from the hands of barbarians for a sum of money who redeemed us by His cross and blood. He will say now, "I was captive and ye redeemed me."

'We give you the warmest thanks that you have wished us to be sharers of your anxiety in so great and necessary a work; that you have offered us fruitful fields, in which we might cast the seeds of our hope. We have, then, sent you a sum of 100,000 sesterces [about 800*l.*] But that you may have in mind in your prayers the brethren and sisters who have laboured so promptly and liberally, I have subjoined their names.'

But in A.D. 252 the greatest call to works of mercy came on the Church as a great organisation of charity.

A dreadful plague which devastated the whole Roman Empire for twenty years, in 252 broke out in Carthage. Cyprian was in Carthage again at his post. 'All were

shuddering, fleeing, shunning the contagion, impiously exposing their own kindred; the bodies of those who had died by the pestilence lay unburied over the whole city.'

Cyprian gathered the Christians together, and by word and example showed them that it was not enough to cherish their own people. 'There was nothing wonderful in that; if they would be more than the publican in the matter, they must do kindness to others also—to their enemies' (to the enemies who had so recently said, 'The Christians and Cyprian to the lions'). 'God makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good,' he said; 'if a man professes to be a son of God, it becomes us to answer to our birth.'

He believed the world to be 'very old, corrupt, and about to perish;' yet he laboured as much for its immediate succour as if his horizon were bounded by it.

Nobly he writes about it in his treatise on 'The Mortality.' 'The kingdom of God, beloved brethren,' he says, 'is beginning to be at hand, the perpetual gladness and possession, lately lost, of Paradise; already heavenly things are taking the place of earthly and great things of small, and eternal things of things that fade away. What reason is there for anxiety? It is for him to fear death who is not willing to go to Christ. What else is the world but a battle against the Devil? Our warfare is against avarice, immodesty, anger, ambition. The mind of man is besieged. So many persecutions the soul suffers daily! Who would not desire to hasten to Christ, since to see Christ is to rejoice?

'But, nevertheless, it disturbs some that this disease attacks us equally with the heathen, as if a Christian believed for this purpose, that he might have the enjoyment of this world and this life, free from the contact of ills, and not as one who undergoes all adverse things here and is reserved for future joy.

'It disturbs some that this mortality is common to us with others, and yet what is there in the world that is not common to us with others according to the law of our first birth? So long as we are in the world we are associated with the human race in fleshly equality, being separated in

spirit. When the earth is barren, famine makes no distinction; in the invasion of an enemy, captivity desolates all; when clouds withhold rain the drought is alike to all; when the rugged rocks rend the ship, the shipwreck is common to all, so long as this common flesh of ours is borne by us in the world.'

'This, in short, is the difference between us and those who know not God: that in misfortune they complain, whilst adversity strengthens us by suffering.' Then, after enumerating the loathsome symptoms of the present plague, he adds, 'What a grandeur of spirit to struggle with all the powers of the mind against so many assaults of death!'

'Many of our people,' he continues, 'die in this mortality—that is, are liberated from this world.'

Then addressing those who grudged to depart by a common disease instead of by the glorious fate of martyrdom, he says, 'We should do not our own will, but God's. It is one thing for the spirit to be ready for martyrdom and another for martyrdom to be ready for the spirit. Such as the Lord finds you when He calls you, such also He judges you. For God does not ask for our blood, but our faith. How preposterous that when we ask daily that the will of God should be done we should not at once obey the command of His will! We struggle and resist, and after the manner of froward servants. Who that is exiled in foreign lands would not desire to return to his country? We regard Paradise as our country. There a great number of our dear ones are awaiting us. To return to their presence and their embrace, what a gladness both for them and for us! There are the glorious company of the apostles; there the host of the rejoicing prophets; there the innumerable multitude of martyrs, there the triumphant virgins; there are merciful men rewarded. To these, brethren, let us hasten with an eager desire; let us crave to be with them and quickly to come to Christ.'

Six years passed from the breaking out of the plague to Cyprian's martyrdom. Some of these he passed in banishment in the neighbouring small seaside town of Curubis.

The 'Acta Proconsularia'[1] give this account of his banishment :—

'The Emperor Valerian being consul for the fourth and Gallienus for the third time, on the third of the calends of September, in the secretariat of Carthage, Paternus, the proconsul, said to Bishop Cyprian—

'"The most sacred Emperors Valerian and Gallienus have thought fit to give me letters, in which they have commanded that those who do not observe the Roman religion must recognise the Roman ceremonies. I have enquired, therefore, of thy name. What dost thou answer me?"

'Bishop Cyprian said, "I am a Christian and a bishop. I know no other gods but the One True God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all things that are therein. This God we Christians serve; to Him we pray day and night for ourselves and for all men, and for the prosperity of our Emperors."

'Paternus, the proconsul, said, "Dost thou persevere in this determination?"

'Bishop Cyprian replied, "A good determination which recognises God cannot be changed."

'Paternus, the proconsul, said, "Art thou, then, prepared, according to the command of Valerian and Gallienus, to go into exile in the town of Curubis?"

'Bishop Cyprian replied, "I go."

'Paternus, the proconsul, said, "Not only concerning the bishops but also concerning the presbyters they have thought fit to give orders to me. I desire therefore to know from thee who are the presbyters who are in this city."

'Bishop Cyprian replied, "In your laws you have well and usefully judged that there shall not be Informers. Therefore these cannot be revealed and given up by me. But they will be found in their own cities."

'Paternus, the proconsul, said, "To-day I am making inquisition in this place."

'Cyprian said, "If discipline forbids that any should give himself up, this must also be open to thy censure; neither

[1] Ruinart.

can they give themselves up ; but if sought for by thee they will be found."

'Paternus, the proconsul, said, "They shall be found by me." And he added, "They have also commanded that private assemblies (*conciliabula*) shall not be held in any places, nor shall they meet in cemeteries. But if any will not observe such a salutary precept he shall lose his head."

'Bishop Cyprian replied, "Do what is commanded thee."

'Then Paternus, the proconsul, commanded Bishop Cyprian to be banished.'[1]

It is remarkable throughout the Roman legal proceedings what knowledge is shown by the officials of the Christian customs, and with what courtesy and respect the rank and character of Cyprian are regarded.

What his life was in this banishment may be filled up from his own letters and treatises, especially the treatise on the Lord's Prayer ; from the 'Life and Passion,' by the deacon Pontius, who was always with him ; and from the 'Acta Proconsularia.'

'In the morning,' he writes, 'we must pray ; that the Lord's resurrection in the morning may be celebrated. At the sunsetting and at the decline of day, of necessity, we must pray again. For since Christ is the true Sun, when we pray that the light may return to us we pray for the advent of Christ, who shall give us the grace of everlasting light. But if, in the Holy Scriptures, the true Sun and the true Day is Christ, so we that are in Christ—that is, in the true Sun and the true Day—should be instant throughout the entire day in petitions.

'Let us not, then, who are in Christ—that is, always in the light—cease from praying even in the night. Let us, beloved brethren, who are always in the light of the Lord, who remember and hold fast what, by grace received, we have begun to be, reckon night for day. New created and new born of the Spirit by the mercy of God, let us imitate what we shall one day be. Since we are to pray and give thanks

[1] Ruinart, *Acta Sincera Martyrum*.

to God for ever, let us not cease in this life also to pray and to give thanks.'[1]

The time of repast was doubtless not without heavenly benediction : 'the temperate mind would often be gladdened with psalms and the sweetness of religious music.' And in his walks along the Roman roads or the vineyard paths many a blind and feeble wayfarer would remember the sound of his sympathetic voice, the glance of his observant eye, the touch of his kind hand. Many widowed and destitute would go away relieved and gladdened from his doors by alms ; for kindnesses were always with him the accompaniments of prayer.

The Eucharist was celebrated daily.

Such was his delight in sacred discourse that he prayed he might be put to death 'in the very act of speaking about God.' But since, chiefly and perpetually, he was shepherd and bishop of souls, wherever he was, the condition of the Church, of his own Carthage, and throughout the world, was on his heart.

From his exile he writes of the persecution then going on at Rome, and encourages his own clergy and people. In A.D. 257, the last year of his life, he writes to the martyrs in the mines, speaking in sympathetic detail of all their sufferings—'beaten, chained, fettered.'

'O feet blessedly bound, which are bound not by the smith, but by the Lord ! O feet bound for the present time in the world that they may be always free with the Lord ! O feet, lingering for a while among the fetters and cross bars but to go quickly to Christ on a glorious road !' And he asks that they will pray that 'God will perfect the confession of us all.' They respond thus to his letter, from the mines :—

'You speak, dearly beloved Cyprian, always with deep meaning, as suits the condition of the time. For by whatever good things you have introduced in your many books you have described yourself to us. And you know, beloved, that our eager wish was that we might see you, our teacher

[1] *Epistle to Donatus.*

and friend, attain to the crown of a great confession. As a sounding clarion you have stirred up God's soldiers. You have also marshalled the troops of the brethren with your words. Believe us, dearest, that your innocent spirit is not far from the hundredfold reward.'

And at last it came.[1]

'A messenger came to him from the city, from Xystus, the good and peace-making priest; the coming execution was instantly looked for; he was in daily expectation of dying. In the meantime many eminent people gathered around him, of most illustrious rank and family, and noble, who, on account of ancient friendship with him, repeatedly urged his withdrawal, and also offered places where he might retire. But he had now set the world aside, though he would even then have done what was being asked by so many and so faithful friends, if it had been bidden him by Divine command. He continued instructing God's servants to tread underfoot the sufferings of this present time by the contemplation of the glory which was to be revealed.

'These were the daily acts of a priest destined to be a Sacrifice well-pleasing to God. When, by the command of the proconsul, the officer with his soldiers came unexpectedly on him (or rather imagined he had come unexpected), they came to his gardens, which he had sold in the early days of his faith, and which, when restored by the kindness of God, he would have sold again for the use of the poor, if he had not wished to avoid ill-will from his persecutors. He went forward with a lofty and erect bearing, gladness in his countenance and courage in his heart. Having reached Carthage, the trial being delayed till the next day, he was brought back from the prætorium to the officer's house.

'Then all at once the news spread through Carthage that Thascius was brought forth; there was not one who did not know him—glorious to us for the devotion of faith, and also to be honoured by the Gentiles.

[1] The rest is translated from Ruinart, the Passion by Pontius, and the *Acta Proconsularia*.

'At last that next day dawned, that destined, that promised, that divine day; the day glad with the consciousness that it was to be the festival of a martyr. He went forth from the house of the chief officer (*princeps*) (it was Aug. 13, 258), he himself a prince of Christ and God, amongst the assembly of a mixed multitude, walled in on all sides by that mass of people.

'On the way he had to pass the stadium (racecourse)—for him to tread a fit way, who having finished his course was speeding to the crown of righteousness. When he came to the prætorium, as the proconsul had not yet come forth, and as he sat bathed in sweat with no quiet around him (though the seat was covered with white fine linen, as if under the very death-stroke of martyrdom he was to be honoured with episcopal symbols), one of the officers who had formerly been a Christian offered him his own dry clothes in exchange, desiring nothing in return for his proffered kindness but to possess the martyr's clothing.

'Cyprian replied, "We apply remedies to inconveniences which probably to-day will cease for ever."

'Suddenly he is announced to the proconsul. He is brought forward; he is placed before him; he is interrogated as to his name'

So far Pontius. In the 'Acta Proconsularia' it is related thus:—

'Galerius Maximus, the proconsul, said to Bishop Cyprian, "Thou art Thascius Cyprian?"

'Bishop Cyprian replied, "I am."

'Galerius Maximus, the proconsul, said, "The most sacred Emperors have commanded thee to sacrifice."

'Bishop Cyprian replied, "I do it not."

'Galerius Maximus said, "Take counsel with thyself."

'Bishop Cyprian replied, "Do what is commanded thee. In so just a cause there is no need for consultation."

'Galerius Maximus, having spoken with the council, said words to this effect: "Long hast thou lived with a sacrilegious mind, and many men hast thou gathered to conspire with thee, and hast constituted thyself an enemy to the Roman gods

and the sacred laws ; nor have the pious and most sacred princes Valerian and Gallienus, the Augusti, and Valerian the most noble Cæsar [1] been able to recall thee to the observance of the ceremonial due to them ; and since now thou art apprehended as the author and standard-bearer (*signifer*) of abominable crimes, those will be instructed whom by thy wickedness thou hast gathered to thee. By thy blood discipline will be restored."

'And having said this he recited the sentence from the tablet: "It pleases that Thascius Cyprian be beheaded with the sword."

'And Bishop Cyprian said, "*Thanks be to God.*"'

The Deacon Pontius writes of the proconsul's sentence, 'Nothing could be more complete than this sentence, nothing truer. All things therein said, though said by a Gentile, were divinely said ; and this is no marvel, since the High Priest [alluding to Caiaphas] prophesied of the Passion [of Christ]. A standard-bearer, indeed, had he been, who was ever teaching how to bear the standard of Christ ; and by his blood, discipline did, indeed, begin to be established ; but it was the discipline of martyrs.'

The 'Acta Proconsularia' go on :—

'After his sentence a multitude of the brethren said, "And we also will be beheaded with him."

'A tumult arose among the brethren, and a great crowd followed him.

'And when Cyprian was brought forth into the field of Sextus he himself laid aside his upper garment and knelt down on the ground and prostrated himself in prayer before the Lord. Then he divested himself of his dalmatic and stood in his linen garment, and desired that twenty-five gold pieces should be given to the executioner.'

'And when he left the doors of the prætorium,' Pontius writes, 'a multitude of soldiers accompanied him ; and, that nothing might be wanting in his passion, centurions and tribunes guarded his side. Now the place where he was to suffer is level, so that from the trees thickly planted

[1] Thus in the *Acta Proconsularia*, Ruinart.

all around a sublime spectacle could be seen. And lest, on account of the crowds that thronged the place, those who revered him should miss the sight of him, they climbed, like Zaccheus, into the trees.

'And then, having with his own hands bound his eyes, he tried to hasten the slowness of the executioner, whose office it was to wield the sword, and who could scarcely clasp in his trembling hands the weapon which was to bring about the death of that man so dearly prized.'

It seems he had thought he would have been given to utter some prophetic words at his death ; but his eloquent lips and his holy life had spoken already ; and no better last sermon could be left to thrill through the hearts of his people than the words with which he accepted his sentence of death : '*Deo Gratias.*' [1]

[1] St. Cyprian is in art represented with a gridiron and sword. Dedication of churches : one church in England, Chaddesley, in Worcestershire ; at Carthage two great basilicas. It was in an oratory of St. Cyprian on the shore that Monica was praying when St. Augustine secretly abandoned her to go to Rome.

CHAPTER V.

LEGENDS OF THE EARLY MARTYRS.

We come now for a time out of the wider region of history into that of individual story and of legend.

Clement, Fabian, Cyprian, and Perpetua, and even Nicomede come before us with a wide historical surrounding and a definite local and historical colouring. They touch the world at many points; they tread the common earth. To understand them we must understand something of their age, of the place and people, the cities, the empire amidst which they lived. Clement, while supremely Christian, was also Jewish, and Greek, and Roman; the world he touched was the historical Rome and Corinth. Cyprian was a great provincial. In studying his life we learn the life of his time; of the Carthage and Rome of his times; its every-day ways and customs; its society, amusements, dress, gardens, table, as well as its especial temptations and controversies. The light of these biographies illumines in a measure a wide space around them. But in the cluster of saintly lives—or rather deaths—now opening before us we see each as by a flash of lightning at one supreme moment of martyrdom; or as by a lamp, throwing its circle of intense light on one point and leaving all around in darkness.

Each story might, in a sense, have happened anywhere, at any time. There is one vivid dramatic scene—the persecutors, the victim, the incidents of torture, the spirit victorious over the flesh; the surrounding crowds, like a tragic chorus, either sharing the rage of the persecutor or in sympathy, more or less, with the sufferer. But, whether the world surrounding that little spot of light is Rome, Spain,

Carthage, Antioch, Nicomedia, or Verulamium makes no difference to the story. All around the immediate actors is in darkness.

Of all the biographies in this section no details are given at all in the contemporary 'Acta Martyrum,' except of St. Vincent, who suffered in the persecution of Diocletian in Spain. But even these contemporary Acta of St. Vincent are scarcely to be distinguished from the other more obviously legendary stories ; and yet of the existence of those martyrs, of their confession, their fidelity to death, their share in the conquests of the kingdom of Christ, for whom they suffered, there seems no doubt. Their names are in the earliest martyrologies. The homage paid them began when those who had seen them die were still living.

Of these fourteen martyrs the greater number suffered in the persecution under Diocletian, early in the fourth century. It may be best to begin with St. Laurence, who suffered under Valerian, in the same persecution as Cyprian of Carthage.

St. Laurence

OF SPAIN.

August 10.

(Martyred A.D. 258. In all the Calendars. Sarum Ep. and Gosp., 2 Cor. ix. 6–10; St. John xii. 24–6.)

The name of St. Laurence is in all the Calendars. Pope Leo the Great said that his patronage was for Rome what that of St. Stephen was for Jerusalem. He seems to have been naturally associated with the first martyr on account of his being, like him, a deacon. The Emperor Constantine built a basilica at Rome over his tomb, in the cemetery outside the gates of Rome. The Empress Pulcheria built a beautiful church in his name; another was raised on the Pincian Hill in early days. 'There is scarcely a city in Christendom which does not contain a church or altar dedicated in honour of him.' In England there are 280 churches bearing his name. Scarcely one among the martyrs is more frequently represented in devotional pictures—young, 'with a look of calm sweetness almost angelic,' in the vestments of a deacon, with the gridiron, or iron bed, on which he was tortured; sometimes with a plate full of the gold and silver treasures which it was his office to dispense; sometimes carrying a cross, or swinging a censer, as a deacon in a procession.

And this is, briefly, the legend of the brief life of service and the death of torture which have so held the heart of Christendom.

Laurence was a Spaniard. His father, Orentius, and his mother, Patience, lived in a country house two or three miles from the town of Huesca, still called from him Loretto. Their holy lives are still commemorated on the 1st of May near their native town. Their son was educated

[1] Ruinart.

at Saragossa, and either there or at Genoa, on the way to Rome, began that friendship between the young Laurence and St. Sixtus, afterwards of Rome, which lasted until the martyrdom of both within three days of each other.

When Sixtus became Bishop of Rome he appointed his young countryman and friend Archdeacon, or head of the seven deacons originally appointed by Clement, and further organised by Fabian to collect and certify the Acts of the Martyrs and otherwise serve the Church. The century and a half which had elapsed since Clement, had added largely to the material riches of the Roman Christians; they were in possession, as common ecclesiastical property, of houses, gardens, even palaces, chalices and vessels of gold and silver richly embossed and jewelled, embroidered vestments. But they also numbered among them many poor, widowed, and crippled, and sick, to whom it was Laurence's office and delight to minister. His office thus combined the administration of considerable property in lands and money, and much personal care of the poor, of whom 1,500 were on the lists of the Church to be relieved.

There was nothing to indicate the approach of persecution. The Emperor Valerian's palace was so full of Christians, openly known to be such, that Eusebius says it was like a church; and he himself at the beginning showed them a courtesy and regard not yet experienced in the history of the Church.[1]

On this tranquil and expanding life of increasing wealth, and benevolent use of it, burst suddenly, as an earthquake, a new edict of persecution. It was thought the riches of the Roman Christians were one occasion of it, but chiefly it was attributed to a superstitious terror which seized the Emperor lest the twenty years' pestilence which was wasting city after city—the same which called forth Cyprian's noble beneficence at Carthage—and also the inroads, on all sides, of the barbarians might be the consequence of the dis-

[1] From Eusebius, *Les Petits Bollandistes*, Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, and Alban Butler.

pleasure of the ancient gods at the desertion of their altars and contempt of their rites by the Christians.

Once more the decree went forth that the Christians were to be compelled to sacrifice to the gods or to die, but not to be suffered to die until every means had been exhausted to make them apostatise.

The blow fell first on the head of the Roman Church Sixtus was arrested, and on his refusal to offer incense to the gods was loaded with chains, thrown into the Mamertine prison, and sentenced to death.

The young deacon Laurence followed him weeping and said, 'Whither are you going, O my father, without your son? What would you do without him whom you have chosen to minister with you at the altars? In what have I displeased you? Do you think me capable of cowardice? Did not St. Peter yield to Stephen the glory of being first of the martyrs? Shrink not from the offering up of a child whom you have nurtured. His triumph will be yours.'[1]

'Far from me, my son,' was the answer, 'to abandon you; but the faith of Jesus Christ calls you to greater combats than mine. I am already broken with old age, and for me they prepare but light trials. But to you, who are in the flower of your age and the vigour of your youth, the tyrants will grant a more glorious triumph. Cease, then, to weep. If I am to shed my blood for the Gospel, you also shall pour forth yours. Three days more of patience and you shall follow me. Why would you only have a portion of my victory, since you shall have a victory altogether your own? Why so crave my presence? Elijah mounting to the heavens left Elisha on the earth, and the disciple did not lose courage. Go now and take

[1] It is said in *Les Petits Bollandistes* that St. Ambrose 'puts these words into the mouth of St. Laurence.' This dramatising of the stories of the martyrs, in a way sanctioned by the classical historians, gives the greater value to such narratives as those of Perpetua and Cyprian. In the poems of Prudentius, in the fifth century, on St. Laurence and St. Vincent we naturally expect this.

care, and distribute the treasures of the Church which I have left you.'

And then he gave him the kiss of peace and was parted from him, and Laurence went in obedience to that farewell commission to search out the poor Christians of Rome.

First he hasted to the Cœlian Hill, where lived a holy widow called Cyriaca, who had given refuge in her house to many of the faithful priests and other ministers.

It was already night when Laurence entered this house, and there he washed the feet of the brethren.

Cyriaca whilst ministering to the wants of all had herself been suffering for a long time from grievous pain in her head. Laurence (says the Legend) laid his hands on her head, making the sign of the Cross, and she was cured perfectly; then he distributed alms according to the need of each.

The same night he went on to the quarter near the Cloaca Maxima, into the house of Narcissus, where again he found a great number of Christians who had taken refuge there. There he did the same works of humility and charity as in the house of Cyriaca; and also restored sight to a blind man, making the sign of the Cross.

Thence he directed his steps towards the Viminal, in the quarter of the patricians, and descended into a catacomb, where he found sixty-three Christians, men and women. He entered with tears in his eyes, gave them the kiss of peace, and distributed to them the succour he had brought. In this place he met a holy priest called Justin, who had been ordained by Sixtus. Laurence, knowing his character, would have kissed his feet. Justin forbade him, but Laurence vanquished in this combat of humility, kissed his feet and washed them, and also washed the feet of all the brethren.

Having spent the night in these services of love, and fulfilled the intentions of Sixtus, he saw him once again on the last steps of his last journey towards his execution. As soon as he perceived him he cried out from afar, 'Ah, holy father, forsake me not. I have done all you bade me;

the treasures with which you entrusted me I have given to the poor.'

The soldiers who were guarding St. Sixtus, hearing the word 'treasures,' seized Laurence, and he was brought before the Emperor and questioned about the treasures, but, as he refused to say a word, he was given into the custody of Hippolytus, a Roman knight, with the command that he should be examined about those treasures of the Church.

Hippolytus took him to his own house on the Viminal, and there shut him in a prison with many other prisoners on the spot which can be seen in our days under the Church of S. Lorenzo in Fonte.

Among these he found a man called Lucillus, who had been long imprisoned there, and had become blind by weeping over his miseries.

Laurence spoke to him of Him who had healed the man born blind. 'If you will believe in Jesus Christ,' he said, 'I promise to cure you;' and then he found that Lucillus had long been wishing for baptism. Laurence baptised him then and there, and in receiving light into his soul the light of his bodily eyes came back.

The fame of this miracle soon spread through the city, and many other blind men came and threw themselves at the feet of Laurence and received sight.

Hippolytus began to be moved by these wonders, and courteously entreated Laurence to tell him of those 'treasures' of which he had spoken.

'O Hippolytus,' he said, 'if you will believe in God, the Almighty Father, and in His Son Jesus Christ, I can engage to show you great treasures, and I can promise you eternal life.'

These words, and the grace of God, worked so mightily in the heart of Hippolytus that he turned to the faith and received baptism from the hands of Laurence, with all his household, consisting of nineteen persons.

Summoned once more before the Emperor and interrogated about his 'treasures,' he asked three days to collect them, and this was granted him, with the order that Hippo-

lytus should accompany him everywhere. Laurence collected as many as he could find of the blind and lame and other afflicted ones, and went with this company to the palace of the Emperor. 'August prince,' he said, 'these are the treasures of the Church which I have brought to you; treasures which ever increase and never grow less, which are to be found everywhere and which everyone may share.'

The Emperor, enraged, commanded him to be tortured, and that all sorts of instruments of torture should be brought to show him what could be inflicted on him.[1]

But Laurence said, 'Unhappy one, these may seem torments to thee, but not to me; for long have I desired to eat at this table.'

Then he was dragged to tribunal after tribunal, from the Palatine to the Capitol, until he reached the Viminal, where he died. Beaten, lacerated, his limbs dislocated, scorched with slow fire, he prayed, 'Adorable Lord Jesus, have mercy on Thy servant, who has not been cowardly enough to deny Thy name;' and thinking he was dying of the anguish, he asked God to receive his soul. But it is said that a voice from heaven told him he was not yet at the end, but had a hard battle still to fight.

'Blessed be Thou,' he said, 'my Lord and my God, who showest such mercy to me, unworthy. Grant me grace, my Saviour, to make known to all around that Thou never forsakest Thy servants.'

To the unjust judge he spoke of the fire which burns without consuming.

At last the tribunal was set up at the Baths of Olympius, on the Viminal, near the house of Sallust. The examination began again from the beginning. He was interrogated as to his birth and his country.

'As to my country,' he said, 'I am a Spaniard, though I have been at Rome from my youth. They made me a

[1] The legends vary, some making the prefect his judge and another (which is adopted in *Les Petits Bollandistes*) attributing the cruelties to the Emperor Valerian himself.

Christian from my cradle, and I have always been brought up in the knowledge and practice of the Divine laws.'

Fresh menaces and mockeries followed, until he was stretched on the iron bed of torture and slowly scorched to death.

It is said his countenance was radiant with light and joy, and that he said, jesting with his anguish, 'Don't you see that my flesh is roasted enough on one side? Turn it to the other.'

And so at last his victory came, and thanking God for opening to him the gates of heaven, he yielded up his spirit.

And the next day the newly baptised Hippolytus and the priest Justin carried the poor lacerated body to the cemetery near the Via Tiburtina, two miles from Rome, where not a hundred years afterwards Constantine raised the Basilica over his tomb.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches : 280. Represented as a Deacon, with grid-iron, thurible, church, and book, long cross, staff, or alms-bag.

St. Vincent

OF SPAIN.

January 22.

(Martyred A.D. 304. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Ecclus. xiv. 20 and xv. 4–6 ; and St. John xii. 24, 25. In all the Calendars.)

One legend links St. Vincent to St. Laurence by a tie of kindred. It is said that his mother Enola, of Huesca, was the sister of Laurence. At all events they were fellow-countrymen and fellow-townsmen, both born at Huesca, a town among the mountains of Granada ; both brought up from the cradle by devout parents in the Christian faith ; both young, both filling the humble office of deacon ; both united in reverent friendship with the bishop called with them to confess their Lord ; both called home by a terrible similarity of tortures. Between the martyrdom of Laurence, A.D. 258, on the Viminal Hill at Rome and of Vincent, A.D. 303, at Valencia, in Spain, only forty-five years elapsed. Vincent was only twenty years of age when he suffered. Enola, the mother of Vincent, might recall the news from Rome of the heroic endurance of her young brother the deacon Laurence. The story of that martyrdom would be a sacred inheritance and an inspiring memory in that Christian family. From his earliest years the parents dedicated their son to God, and, as soon as he was old enough to learn, committed him to the charge of Valerius, Bishop of Saragossa (where, according to one legend, St. Laurence first met St. Sixtus). As between Sixtus and Laurence, a close friendship seems to have grown up between Valerius and Vincent, one of the many holy and mutually sustaining friendships between the young soldier of Christ and the veteran. Before he reached twenty years Vincent was ordained deacon.

Valerius was a man of learning and influence and high

character, but he had an impediment in his speech, which hindered his preaching. Thus it happened that Vincent, fervent, brave, and eloquent, was early appointed to preach to the people in his stead.

The Church throughout the world had long been at peace. Diocletian had been reigning eighteen years—since 285—and not an assault had been made on the Christian faith.

Since the martyrdom of Laurence, in A.D. 258, much had happened in the Roman world. Valerian, the occasion of the last persecution, had died of grief and shame, a vanquished captive, led about in mockery and exhibited in triumph to the multitude by the Persian victor Sapor.

The Empire had been engaged in more than one mortal combat with the Gothic invaders, in Bithynia, in Thrace, in Greece. Aurelian had defeated and captured Queen Zenobia at Palmyra. For eighteen years the strong hand of the soldier Emperor, once a slave, who had fought his way to the Imperial throne, had ruled the State and kept its foes at bay.

Meantime the Christian faith during forty tranquil years had been steadily spreading and visibly triumphing.

The temples of the ancient gods, the schools of the philosophers were more and more deserted. In every city and town, large, and, in some places, richly decorated buildings arose for the worship of Christ.

The strength of the new faith no more lay in its obscurity, but in the manifestation of its strength. The only daughter of Diocletian had embraced it. Still the old State religion kept its hold on the officials and bound with superstitious terrors the scattered pagan dwellers in the villages. And still the philosophers resented the defection of their disciples. The country people dreaded what seemed to them an impious atheism likely to draw down vengeance from the deserted gods. The philosophers detested a theory which sought to replace their theories by a doctrine which seemed to them a new superstition under the guise of a philosophy. It is from the *peasants* and the *philosophers* that the last great persecution seems to have sprung.

Galerius and Maximian, whom Diocletian associated with him in the empire towards the end of his reign, were soldiers of fortune, men sprung from the peasantry, and at his new Eastern capital of Nicomedia the two peasant Cæsars, with the philosophers, especially the Neo-Platonists, worked on the mind of Diocletian until he reluctantly consented to issue an edict against the Christians.

Unhappily, the forty years of tranquillity had produced the too frequent effect of outward prosperity in lulling the Christians to sleep, in the increase of luxury and worldliness, in divisions among themselves.

This persecution, the tenth and last ('*the* persecution,' as Eusebius calls it), was as well-directed as it was ferocious. The vehement hatred of the peasant soldier emperors was only too skilfully guided by the philosophers. The objects of attack were the clergy, the Church buildings, and the sacred books; more especially the Holy Scriptures, which were recognised as the historic source of the faith, and the contemporary Acts of the Martyrs, so precious from their local associations and as a witness that Pentecost was not a close but a starting-point—the Incarnation the beginning of a new life in humanity.

This especial aim of the persecution is indicated by the name given in the Church to those who failed to hold fast their confession. They were called not only 'lapsed,' but 'traditores,' betrayers of the sacred treasures of the Scriptures.

With regard to the Holy Scriptures, diffused everywhere, the effort could have no success. The impossibility of eradicating these is among the proofs of their universal diffusion and recognition as something apart, and especially Divine.

But there can be little doubt that Christian biography has suffered much by the destruction of the contemporary 'Acta,' often so carefully collected and compiled from the testimony of those who beheld the martyrdoms.

The persecution lasted six years. Then the emperors virtually declared themselves defeated, and in a few years

more Christianity, under Constantine, became the recognised religion of the State. But this result—the nearness of this shore so soon to be reached—must not make us doubt the reality of the last storm, the strain of the last struggle with the surges before the haven was won. *We* know how near the shore was ; not so those who were dashed to death among the breakers.

The persecution very soon reached Spain.

The edict was promulgated A.D. 303. In 304 the conduct of the prosecutions seems to have fallen into merciless hands. Dacian, the proconsul, ordered the arrest of the bishops and clergy in various cities ; and among them the aged bishop Valerius and his young deacon Vincent were taken from Saragossa to Valencia, chained hand and foot, loaded round the neck with heavy weights, and left in prison many days, solitary and half starved.

At the end of these days, when they were brought before the tribunal, instead of finding them worn and cowed Dacian was surprised to see them vigorous and full of spirit, so that he said to his people, 'Why have you given them so freely to eat and drink?' He addressed Valerius with courtesy. 'Do you not know,' he said, 'that those who despise the Imperial decrees will lose life? The rulers of the world have commanded that you should offer libations, not willing that the dignity of the ancient worship should be profaned with new laws.'

And then turning to Vincent, son of the 'most noble consul' Agrestes, he added, 'And thou also, Vincent, hearken wisely to my words, distinguished as thou art by thy noble birth and by the beauty and grace of thy youth, before thou choose between being loaded with honours and subdued by tortures.'

Then the gentle old bishop, of wonderful simplicity and guilelessness, full of learning, but with an impediment in his speech, was silent and made no reply.

Vincent said, 'If thou commandest me, my father, I will make answer to the judge.'

And Valerius said, 'I have long entrusted thee, my

dearest son, with the Divine Word; and now to thee I commit the answer for the faith, for which we stand here.'

Vincent made his defence, or rather accusation, in words which recall the tremendous rebuke of St. Stephen, the first martyr deacon, convicting the Sanhedrim of being idolaters, uncircumcised in heart, betrayers and murderers of the Just One promised by the prophets they professed to revere.

'Know,' Vincent said, 'that it is held among Christians to be a nefarious prudence to blaspheme by denying the worship of the Godhead. And, not to detain thee, we Christians profess to be worshippers, servants, and witnesses of the One True God, who abideth for ever. In His name we must ever take spiritual weapons to contend with the subtleties of your elaborate arguments, fearless of your threats and punishments; yea, rather most gladly embracing death for the truth. For thy torments do but bring us home to our own country; through death we are conducted into life. It profits that the flesh should perish by diabolical cruelty, since the inner man fearlessly preserves his faith. For that most poisonous and murderous serpent, who first envied man his paradise and, robbing him of immortality, made him subject to death, is now constraining you to assault the innocence of Christians. He by his malice substituted the worship of idols for the worship of God. It is he and his satellites that we, by calling on God, banish from poor possessed human bodies, it is he whom you honour with the vain praises of a profane adoration, with madness preferring the creature to the Creator. For the devil burns with rage against the Christian faith, and when he sees himself despised he groans.'[1]

Then Dacian sentenced the Bishop to banishment for contempt of the imperial edict. But the young 'rebel' who had offered the public insult he singled out for especial torments. 'Stretch him on the rack,' he said, 'before the other torments;' and then, 'What wilt thou say now, Vincent? How wilt thou take care of thy wretched body now?'

[1] *Acta Sincera Martyrum* (Ruinart).

But Vincent, strengthened by the presence of God, with a cheerful countenance answered, 'This is what I have ever desired; nothing is more friendly, more familiar to me than this (perhaps recalling from childhood the familiar martyr story of his mother's brother, the young deacon Laurence). 'Lo, I am going on high, and on those princes of thine I shall look down from a higher world. The servant of God is ready to suffer all for his Saviour.'

And then began the combat between force and faith, the outer and the inner man, the whole might of the empire of the world and one believing human spirit, of which we must not lose the sublimity and far-reaching power in our horror of the atrocious details of the torture.

The martyr stories too often seem to take us out of a human world altogether into some wild underworld of wicked gnomes and sprites; into some horrible circle of a medieval Inferno, lurid with fires and peopled with devils ferocious and grotesque.

But these racks, these iron beds of torture were realities, and their remains still exist. The coals which scorched the flesh of our brethren burn on our hearths now, and the torments which they endured were as real as the changed world their heroic faith has wrought for us.

It does seem as if the courage, the obstinacy, the refusal even to acknowledge that they felt the suffering, excited the persecutors to an insane fury of cruelty, in the vain effort to subdue the spirit which thus defied them.

And it must be confessed that, though not a few of the martyrs reached the height of a courage faithful and unconquerable as that of St. Stephen before the Sanhedrim, perhaps not many penetrated to that depth of patient forgiving love with which amidst the murderous stones he looked up and said, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'

Their aim sometimes seems to have been rather to show how mighty the Lord they confessed was to sustain them in suffering than how gracious to forgive those who made them suffer.

And yet even Stephen, with 'his face like an angel's'

and his dying prayer like the Lord's, did not soften the hearts of his enemies—did not, at once, soften even the heart of the Apostle Paul !

Something in the bearing of these later martyrs did unquestionably make their confession the conversion of multitudes.

Again and again the tortures of the young Vincent were renewed, with intervals of repose just sufficient to make further torment possible. Again and again the proconsul Dacian was exasperated at his failure to subdue the young spirit. Once he had the torturers themselves punished for the feebleness of their work.

'What are you about?' he said. 'I do not recognise your hands to-day. Ye have succeeded in breaking the silence of parricides, in wrenching from him the secrets of the adulterer, and now ye cannot compel this despiser of the Emperors to silence.'

But Vincent said, 'What you say is not reasonable. I confess Christ to be the Lord, the Son of the Highest Father, the Only One of the Only One; Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit I confess to be the One Only God. Because I say what is true thou wouldst have me deny. Rather shouldst thou torture me if I declared thy princes to be gods. The gods thou wouldst have me confess are idols of wood and stone. Thou, their witness, makest thyself the dead pontiff of the dead. But I sacrifice to the One Living God, who is blessed for ever.'

Then Dacian appealed once more to his youth. 'Have pity,' he said, 'on the flower and beauty of thy years!'

But Vincent replied, 'O poisonous tongue of the devil, to what wouldst thou not move me, who hast dared to tempt our Lord? Better far than beauty is that which thou feignest to pity. By thy bitter poison thou wouldst crush the sweet faith and courage from a Christian soul.'

Again the seductions gave place to the scourges and the fire, till every form of torture had been exhausted, and at last he was stretched, like Laurence, on the iron bed, above the flames; yet the countenance remained glad, the spirit grew

braver, the confession of Christ the Lord more persistent than ever, until at last Dacian exclaimed, 'Alas! we are vanquished!'

Then Vincent was thrown into a dungeon, among broken potsherds, but there, it is said (the only external supernatural manifestation recorded in the story of this martyrdom), the angels filled the night with light and the silence with their songs.

'Know, O Vincent unconquered,' they say, 'He for whose name thou hast fought so faithfully, who has made thee victor in thy sufferings, has prepared for thee a crown, and thou shalt be joined to our society.'

So they sang, and the modulated sweetness, like a resounding organ, was diffused afar. The gaolers, astonished, approached the closed doors, and saw the boundless light, and the very edges of the broken potsherds bright like flowers, and the blessed martyr of God walking about, his bonds loosed, and singing. And, moved by fear, wonder, and reverence, they gave up their heathen faith for the Christian religion.

Then the multitude of the faithful, so long mourning for his sufferings, but now rejoicing in his heavenly glory, came around him, and to these he said, 'Fear not, for darkness I have light. Him whom you believed to be groaning in torments you find rejoicing in the praises of God. Wonder rather and be sure that Christ will ever be victor in His servants.'

And Dacian, hearing of this, trembling and confounded, said, 'What further can we do? We have been vanquished.'

The weary, lacerated limbs were laid at last, by the proconsul's permission, to repose on a soft bed. His friends gathered around. It is said he was but reserved for further suffering, but Christ determined the reward should come. When the martyr of God was laid on the couch and kind and pious hands were softening it for him, with fixed resolve he yielded up his spirit to heaven.

Prudentius in his poem on St. Vincent records the

quaint and poetical legends which gathered round the tortured body, through which he had made such a good confession.

'Throw it into the open fields,' said Dacian, 'lest the Christians should gather his remains.'

It was therefore carried some way off and cast out at the foot of a mountain in a desert place, where the reverent hands that would so willingly have honoured it could not touch it. But all nature, the Christians believed, was friendly to the mortal relics of him who had made such a good confession for his Lord. A crow, a minister of grace, like the ravens of old to Elijah, constituted herself guardian of the outcast corpse, and, 'offensive' and slow and lazy creature as it was, flew vehemently at any bird or beast of prey which dared approach, perching on the head of a wolf which sought to prowl too near, and pecking at his eyes until he fled.

Baffled in his first attempt, Dacian then commanded the body to be taken far out in a boat and thrown into the deep sea, weighted with a heavy stone. But the obedient waves swept the stone and the saint back to the shore and laid him gently on the beach, and even, some said, scooped out a temporary grave in the ribbed sand. But at last it was given to the tender human hands of a poor widowed woman, called Ionica, to lay the body in its resting-place. She took it from its wave-worn sandy sepulchre, and bore it to a little obscure church near the shore, where it remained until in brighter days it was translated with all honour to its place before the altar of a church outside the walls of Valencia.

Poetical illustrations of a most real combat. Soul and body the young deacon martyr had been one of the bulwarks of the City of God. Soul and body he had helped to win the victory for the souls and bodies of liberated Christians through all after years for ever.

Dacian was right. By that fragile tortured frame he himself, the emperors, the world, *had* been 'vanquished.'[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 4. Represented as a Deacon, holding an iron hook, or a boat, or a palm, with an angel breaking his chains: on a gridiron, with a wolf and a crow, and a millstone.

The Legend of St. Alban, Protomartyr and in early days Patron of Britain.[1]

June 17.

(Martyred circa A.D. 283. In the Calendars of Sarum and York. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Wisdom iv. 7–11, 13–5; St. Matt. xiv. 24–8.)

The course of history leads us next to Roman Britain, to Verulam, on the banks of the little river Ver, in Hertfordshire, one of the many Roman towns scattered then throughout England, connected with each other by the straight and solid and well-repaired Roman roads, linked with Rome by their chain of military stations.

In one of those well-built, well-warmed Roman houses, whose mosaic floors and hot-water baths remain to this day, lived St. Alban, the heir of a wealthy Roman House.

He was sent to Rome to be educated, the Rome of the beginning of the fourth century, with its palaces on the Palatine Hill still full of the splendour of the imperial court ; its temples on the Capitol, with its Sacred Way, still frequented by pagan processions and worshippers ; its magnificent Baths, the resort of the idle citizens ; its Forum, with the stately Hall of Justice, the Senate House, and the

[1] The story is combined from the old legend in the Venerable Bede, and *Les Petits Bollandistes*, who intertwine with it the later twelfth century story of Amphibalus, which seems not so much a popular legend as one of the religious romances or medieval Tracts written in the monasteries for the edification of the people, generally of little true historical interest as records or as literature, as giving the life of the saint, or as reflecting the popular ideal of the legend ; but in this case containing one or two points which seem worth remembering.

In Ruinart's *Acta Sincera Martyrum* there are these two brief notices of St. Alban : 'Gildas Sapiens, who in the fifth century wrote of the slaughter in Britain, among other English martyrs reckons Alban of Verulam, Aaron, and Julian. Of the same Alban Constantius has various things in his *Life of St. German of Autun.*'

Venantius Fortunatus (fifth century) joins Victor of Marseilles with him in this distich :—

'Egregium Albanum fœcunda Britannia profert ;
Massiliâ Victor martyr ab urbe venit.'

shops, still a place of busy commerce and eager litigation; its schools of philosophy and rhetoric thronged by students.

Alban came back to his provincial home at Verulam. Rich and cultivated, and hospitable and travelled, to his house on the banks of the Ver were welcomed travellers and strangers who passed through the place, because his heart was generous and open to those in need of help. And so one day the stranger came to his hearth who became to him the 'angel entertained unawares.'

A Christian priest (called by the later story Amphibalus from his teacher's-cloak), pursued by his persecutors, was received like other unfortunate people into the house of Alban. There he remained hidden for many days. The young host observed him and was touched by his piety.[1] The stranger spent much of the day alone in prayer, and was often found in adoration of his unseen God.

At last Alban asked the meaning of his worship. The priest spoke of the Son of God, the Incarnate Saviour; of the miraculous birth, prophesied for ages; of the Virgin Mary; of the manger and the stable. He also frankly told his young host that if he followed the Christ he would probably end his life by martyrdom, and that this would be the reward for his generous hospitality.

He attracted him by no seductive promises; it was the old trumpet call to believe and follow, to sacrifice and suffer, which penetrates so much deeper, and leads so much higher. Alban retired much moved, but rather in anger than in acquiescence, and would not listen to another word. But the priest remained alone all night in prayer.

And in the night a dream was sent to Alban, which on the next morning he told his guest. His dream completed the teaching of the stranger.

'If what you say is true,' he said, 'explain to me this mysterious dream. I saw a Man descend from heaven, and a great crowd of other men seized Him, bound Him, smote Him with rods, stretched Him on a cross, pierced His hands and feet with nails, His side with a spear, and mocking Him

[1] From the story of Amphibalus, not in Bede.

for hours bade Him descend from the cross. But He, without answering them, only uttered a great cry, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" And then at once He died. Then I saw them take down the lifeless body from the cross, lay it in a sepulchre, sealed fast and surrounded by guards. But, oh wonder, this corpse comes back to life! He comes forth from the grave without breaking the sealed doors. I have seen with my eyes how He rose from the dead. Men clothed in garments white as snow came down from heaven; they returned to heaven together. An innumerable multitude of men in white robes follows this Conqueror of death, never ceasing to sing His praises and to bless the Father, saying, "Blessed be God the Father and His only Son." Explain this dream to me.'

Full of joy, the priest continued his instructions, and afterwards baptised his host. Then, having given his message there, he would at once have gone on to spread the glad news elsewhere. But Alban entreated him to stay a while, that they might worship God together; and when, at length, a final search was made by the soldiers for the stranger, Alban insisted on changing clothes and putting on his teacher's-cloak, and giving himself up to death in his stead.

He was dragged before the judge, who was at the moment before the altars of the gods. The judge threatened that, as he had concealed a sacrilegious rebel in his house, all the punishment due to the fugitive should fall on Alban's head if he abandoned the worship of the gods.

St. Alban, who had voluntarily confessed himself to the soldiers to be a Christian, declared distinctly that he would not obey the judge's command.

Then said the judge, 'Of what family and race are you?'

'What does it matter of what stock I am?' answered Alban. 'If you desire to hear the truth of my religion, be it known to you that I am now a Christian, and bound by Christian duties.'

I ask your name,' said the judge. 'Tell it me immediately.'

'I am called Alban by my parents,' he replied, 'and I worship and adore the True and Living God who created all things.'

Refusing to sacrifice, he was seized and cruelly tortured, and then led into the arena beyond the river to die.

But so dense was the crowd which thronged to see the sentence executed on this man of wealth and rank, and so new a convert, that the bridge was filled. Then Alban turned aside to ford the river, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, the legend says, it dried up at his prayer. The executioner who was to have beheaded him, seeing the miracle, threw down his sword at the martyr's feet, desiring rather to suffer with him than to inflict death on him.

And so the martyr passed on out of the old Roman town up the opposite hill, then called Holmhurst, 'adorned,' says Bede, 'or rather clothed, with all kinds of flowers, having its sides neither perpendicular nor even craggy, but sloping down into a most beautiful plain, worthy from its lovely appearance to be the scene of this martyr's sufferings. Here, therefore, the head of the most courageous martyr was struck off, and here he received the crown of life, which God has promised to those that love Him.'

Bede adds two miracles: one, like a beautiful parable, of a fountain springing up at his request on the top of that fair, flowery, wooded hill; the other a miracle of vengeance, the blinding of the soldier who gave the fatal stroke, yet this also perhaps as true parable, suggesting how those who misuse the power of seeing cease to see.

The other soldier, who had refused to be the cause of Alban's death, was also beheaded at the same time, baptised, Bede says, in his own blood (willingly shed, for mercy, and for the little fragment of truth he had learned), and so rendered worthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

'The blessed Alban,' Bede concludes, 'suffered death on June 22, near the city of Verulam, where afterwards, when peaceable Christian times were restored, a church of wonderful workmanship and suitable to his martyrdom was erected.'

The old pagan city on the plain, with its walls and temples, has passed away, though leaving many remains which we can trace. The city and church on the flowery hill remain a memorial of this our first English martyr, led by his own merciful deeds to the Merciful, a martyr for Christ and for mercy.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: &. Represented as a layman, with a tall cross and with a sword.

St. Denys, Patron of France.

October 9.

(Martyred in 3rd Century.)

From the first patron saint of England we pass to the patron of France. And here we come into the midst of historical controversies which were hot enough at one time to imperil life to the combatants, and in our own days seem scarcely to have altogether cooled. The monks of St. Denys, near Paris, are said to have nearly killed Abelard for denying their saint to have been St. Paul's convert, Dionysius the Areopagite ; and their aged abbot is reported to have died of the debate.

Of the legend of St. Denys there seem to be three versions ; one identifying him with Dionysius the Areopagite, and also with the author of the writings called the 'Pseudo-areopagitica.' This is adopted by 'Les Petits Bollandistes,' and is the tradition of the Greek Churches, and of France and Italy, by which he is called 'Bishop of Athens and Paris.' The second, while accepting much of the same tradition, drops the identification with the Areopagite and represents him as sent on a mission to Gaul by St. Clement of Rome, with six others. The third, following Sulpicius Severus (410) and Gregory of Tours (594), (as adopted by Alban Butler) attributes his mission to St. Fabian of Rome, places his martyrdom under Decius, A.D. 250, and contains very little detail.

Although, as we know from early contemporary documents, especially from the Greek letters concerning the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, written by the Church of Lyons to the Churches of Asia Minor, Christianity made

[1] Authorities : Smith's *Dictionary*, *Les Petits Bollandistes*, Alban Butler, &c.

very early conquests in Gaul, the converts seem to have been chiefly Greek or Oriental colonists, and afterwards Romans. Dionysius is said to have carried the Gospel farthest. In the 'Acts' of his martyrdom (not contemporary) we are assured 'that he built a church at Paris and converted great numbers to the faith, and that after a long and cruel imprisonment he was beheaded for the faith, together with Rusticus, a priest, and Eleutherius, a deacon.'

The 'Acts' add that the bodies of the martyrs were thrown into the river Seine, but taken up and honourably interred by a Christian lady named Catalla, not far from the place where they had been beheaded. In 459, by St. Geneviève's suggestion and direction, a chapel was built over the remains; and King Dagobert, who died in 638, founded there the great Abbey of St. Denys, which was for centuries the burial-place of the Kings of France outside the walls, until in the French Revolution the gorgeous tombs were opened and the royal remains removed and cast out.

There is also a tradition that the first burial-place of these martyrs was at Montmartre (Mons Martyrum).

The longer and more popular tradition floats in and out of ancient stories, Scriptural and apocryphal, like a dream, piecing together in a curious mosaic fragments of various histories. According to this, St. Denys of France, identified not only with Dionysius the Areopagite, but with the author of the mystical books which so deeply influenced medieval thought, was born of a family of high, even royal rank, and was educated by his parents in all the wisdom of the Athenians at Athens, and then was sent to learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians at Hierapolis, in Egypt.

At Heliopolis (the legend says) he saw an eclipse of the sun, 'marvellous and contrary to nature,' during the full moon. He asked his friend, Apollophanius, an astrologer, what this could mean. 'It is a sign that some change is taking place in things Divine,' was the reply. 'Either the God of nature is suffering,' he exclaimed, 'or all the machinery of the world is being destroyed and will return into its ancient chaos.'

ST. DENIS HEARS ST. PAUL PREACH.

Facing p. 118.

He was then twenty years of age, and he marked the exact day and hour.

When, with Damaris (said by the legend to be his wife), he was converted by St. Paul at Athens, he found that the time of this eclipse was the very hour of the darkness during the Passion of Calvary.

St. Dionysius became Bishop of Athens, lived a life of devout and often ecstatic contemplation, wrote books on the celestial hierarchy, and was the type and model of mystical piety. He was at Jerusalem at the time of the death of the Blessed Mother of our Lord, A.D. 50–60, and formed a close friendship with the beloved disciple John, to whose care she had been committed. There is one episode full of significant touches in this legend. St. Dionysius, besides being a great Christian writer, was a most diligent shepherd and bishop of souls, restraining the harshness of less tolerant, because less saintly, men towards the straying sheep.

Once, in order to censure the undue severity shown by Demophilus, a member of his Church, in his absence, Dionysius wrote him a letter, telling him a touching story of one of his disciples called Carpus. This Carpus was a very holy priest, and often had wondrous heavenly visions at the altar; but it happened that once he was so incensed at the perversion of a Christian by an infidel that he prayed the thunderbolts of heaven might destroy them both. When he had made this prayer he went to bed, full of indignation. But when at midnight he rose, as was his wont, to sing the praises of God, it seemed to him as if the house were rent in twain : the heavens opened ; Jesus Christ appeared with His angels and a fiery rain fell from His judgment seat to burn up all sinners.

When he looked below, Carpus saw a horrible chasm, out of which were coming a multitude of serpents, which, entwining themselves around the limbs of those two miserable sinners against whom he had prayed, were dragging them down over the precipice into the abyss. This spectacle gave him 'much joy,' and he was longing to see the end, when they must fall into the burning flames.

While with this immoderate zeal for (what seemed to him) justice he was waiting for the fulfilment of this wish, looking up a second time to heaven, he saw our Lord descend from His throne, and come with the company of His angels, and give His hand to one and another of those on the edge of the abyss to deliver them from the envenomed rage of the serpents.

Carpus was much surprised at a charity so contrary to his own rigour; but he was more so when our Lord, turning to him, said, 'Strike Me, if thou wilt, Carpus, and unburden thy wrath on My own Person. I am ready to receive thy blows and come to die a second time for man. What I demand is not that they may be punished, but that they may cease to sin, and so to render themselves worthy of eternal penalties.'

St. Denys had a fervent desire to win to Christ his old friend Apollophanius, the Egyptian astrologer at Hierapolis, who had been enraged at his conversion, and continued to say the fiercest things against him and his new faith. St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, endeavoured to convince Apollophanius, and St. Denys wrote him a letter, furnishing St. Polycarp with weapons of argument wherewith to vanquish the astrologer. They were successful. Apollophanius became a Christian, and St. Denys wrote a letter of joyful welcome to his old friend. It began, 'I address these words to you, O love of my heart,' and it ended, 'Now I shall die joyful in Jesus Christ, who is my Being and my Life, since you also have received life.'

From Sparta he is said to have written to St. John during his exile at Patmos, assuring him that he should yet live to return to Ephesus and to write his gospel. And at Ephesus he once more saw St. John and had heavenly converse with him.

After this, aged as he was, he left Athens with a purpose of carrying the good news to nations who knew it not. At Malta he found Publius, once governor of the island, like himself a convert of St. Paul. And by the direction of St. Clement of Rome he went westward to preach the Gospel

in Spain and Gaul, where he became Bishop of Paris, in which city he was at last called to suffer martyrdom with long and cruel torments.

The whole legend, which seems to ordinary modern understanding as completely out of the region of historical investigation as a dream, is nevertheless most interesting. As a rich and curious mosaic piecing together into one fabric countless scattered fragments, it links together the East and the West, St. Paul and St. John. The mystical writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, given by a Byzantine Emperor to Louis the Pious of France, translated by John Scotus Erigena, the Irishman, in the ninth century, endowed with a mysterious sacredness and charm by their supposed link at once with ancient Athens and with St. Paul, are said to have influenced more than anything the highest thought of the Middle Ages. The triple (or threefold triple) hierarchy of the angels encircling that Triune Light and Love on which 'dipende il cielo e tutta la natura,' and mediating between this and the threefold hierarchy on earth, captivated the imagination of those twilight days at once with its vague grandeur and its quaint limitations. St. Thomas Aquinas is said to have been so steeped in these writings that if lost they could be recovered entire from his quotations.

Dante drinks deeply through them of Platonic visions of light and good as the only reality, and evil and darkness as mere negations, in that Paradise of ever-changeless, ever-changing joy where the 'ceaseless Hosanna makes perpetual spring, with three melodies in those three orders of bliss, where the vision penetrates into the depths of truth—'nel vero in che si queta ogni intelletto'—into the truth in which every intellect is at rest.

The echo reaches to Milton's

> Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers.

So that this legend of St. Denis is not merely, like others, a reflection of the medieval Christendom from which its rich, quaint colouring is drawn. It is a window through

which Greek thought and Oriental contemplation flicker in for centuries on the Western world.

We are translated by it for a moment from the Latin world, with its Roman roads, its law, its military rule and order and its Latin rhetoric, into the Greek world, with its poetry, its art, its philosophy, its Homer, Æschylus and Plato, and the language which grew out of their thinking, which is also the language of the New Testament.

St. Lucian, Priest and Martyr,[1]

OF BEAUVAIS.

January 8.

(Martyred A.D. 290.)

It seems to be concluded that the St. Lucian of our Calendar comes to us through the Gallican martyrology, and is St. Lucian of Beauvais, 'priest' and martyr in our Prayer Book; at Beauvais honoured as bishop.

He was one of the companions of St. Denys of Paris. He is said to have come of a noble Roman family. He made Beauvais the centre of his mission, but was always making missionary journeys among the neighbouring scattered hamlets and villages. The country, although subject to Rome, was still in a wild state, almost covered with forests. And besides the old Roman 'demons,' such as Mercury and Ceres, St. Lucian and his companions had to contend against earlier local superstitions and rites, often fierce and sanguinary. Antiquarian researches in this district show us statues of Mercury and Ceres side by side with the massive stones of the earlier worship, hollowed to receive the blood of human victims.

To the Romans and Gauls alike the young Christian from Rome addressed his teaching, showing them of the one Creator of the whole world, the One Saviour of all men. 'To the vices of pagans,' says a nearly contemporary funeral sermon, 'he opposed the virtues of Christianity—to egoism charity, to the spirit of vengeance the law of pardon, to the fires of hatred the gentleness of the Gospel, to disorder of manners the wonders of chastity, to covetousness detachment from the things of earth.' His own diet was water and a little bread, and roots. And so he taught and

[1] At Beauvais honoured as Bishop, a very different bishop of Beauvais from him to whom Jeanne d'Arc said on the day of her death, 'It is you that have made me die.'

lived from youth to old age, till the whole of the region was penetrated with his words and holy example, and was changed. Many souls were won to the fold of Christ; among these he trained two to be his fellow-labourers in the priesthood. His own spirit was refreshed from time to time by converse with other missionaries, and the path by which St. Denis came from Paris to visit him was pointed out long after his death.

His vigour continued to very old age. It is always interesting to trace at what various ages the gates of heaven through martyrdom open on the saints of old. At length his success roused opposition. Two of his young converts went before him on the heavenly road. They were beheaded. And then the old man himself was called to follow those who had so long followed him. Imprisoned, insulted, beaten with rods, he declared himself 'a Roman citizen, but by a far more noble title, the servant of Christ,' and throughout his torments the old dying strain of the martyrs was heard again and again from his lips, 'I believe with my heart and confess with my mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,' until he was silenced by the headsman's axe.[1]

[1] The story of St. Lucian, of Samosata, in the Greek martyrologies has some incidents so touching that they may well be given here. He was born at the beginning of the second century at Samosata, in Syria. Left an orphan at twelve, he distributed his goods to the poor. He took refuge with St. Macarius of Edessa, who taught him from the Holy Scriptures the things of eternal life. He opened a school at Antioch. He was ordained priest, and laboured diligently at procuring a correct version of the Holy Scriptures by comparing different Hebrew copies. His version of the Holy Scriptures was much used by St. Jerome. In the persecution of Maximin he was taken to Nicomedia. On his way he restored forty Christian soldiers, who had lapsed, to the faith. Tortured in the stocks, dislocated in every limb, laid on sharp potsherds in the prison, he was left to die of starvation, prostrate and helpless. When the great Greek Feast of Epiphany drew near he desired the Holy Eucharist. Many disciples gathered round, and the gaolers did not oppose. But how could a table be brought into the prison? The dying saint solved the difficulty. 'This breast of mine shall be the table,' he said, 'and I deem it will not be less esteemed of God than one of inanimate matter. And ye yourselves shall be a holy temple, standing round about me.' And so he said the appointed prayers. The next day the officers of the Emperor came to see him. Three times he said, 'I am a Christian,' and then he died.

SS. Crispin and Crispinian, Brothers

OF SOISSONS.

October 25.[1]

(Martyred A.D. 288. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : 1 Cor. v. 9–14; St. Matt. x. 16–22.)

Crispin and Crispinian,[2] missionaries and martyrs at Soissons during the Persecution of Diocletian, are again links between the Anglican and Gallican Calendars.

They were brothers, and in these monastic medieval biographies a glimpse of family life and affection is always precious. Of a noble Roman family, together they believed, together gave up all for Christ, and together went as missionaries to the North of Gaul, and there, at Soissons, together they worked (like St. Paul at his tents) at the trade of shoemaking, not choosing to be of charge to anyone. Sitting at the shoemaker's last, they welcomed all who came, listened to their questions, taught them of Christ, and all the time went on making excellent shoes.

Their courteous, polished manner, their easiness of access, and their good shoes, attracted many to their workshop. And so they remained living at their humble post in the city, sowing, unobtrusive and undisturbed, far and wide, the good seed ; until the seed sprang up and bore fruit a hundredfold ; and then the enemy, seeing the harvest of conversions, at last searched out the hidden sowers, found the brothers at their quiet work, and brought them before the tribunal.

'Is it Jupiter, or Diana, or Apollo, or Mercury, or Saturn that you adore?' they were asked.

'We adore the One Only God,' was the reply of the brothers.

'Whence came you, and what are you doing in Gaul?'

[1] The day of the battle of Agincourt in Shakespeare's *Henry V.*

[2] Shakespeare's Crispin, Crispian.

'We are of a noble Roman family. We came to Gaul in the name and for the love of Jesus Christ, True God, One with the Father and the Holy Spirit.'

Riches and honours were promised them if they sacrificed; and they were menaced with all kinds of tortures if they continued faithful.

'Your threats alarm us not,' they said. (The 'they' is the touching feature throughout the story of these brothers, undivided in life and death.) 'The Christ is our Life; death to us is gain. Your silver and your honours, give them to those who serve you. Long since we renounced all these with joy for Christ.' Then summoning their judges before the higher tribunal, they warned them of the judgment to come and held out to them the promises of eternal life.

The place of their imprisonment is still shown at Soissons; it was part of the residence of the Roman governors.

They endured prolonged torments by fire and in other ways, during which they sang in the words of the old Hebrew Psalmist, 'Help us, O God, for the glory of Thy name. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?'

At last their sufferings were ended by their being beheaded.

It is said that their persecutor, maddened by his failure to conquer them, threw himself into the flames which had been kindled for the martyrs.

The heart goes back affectionately to that open shoemaker's stall at Soissons, from which so much that is bright in its picturesque streets, pleasant walks, and noble churches sprang.[1]

[1] It is interesting to read in Alban Butler's *Lives*, in connection with the shoemaker saints, a sketch of Le Bon Henri, founder of a religious guild of Brother Shoemakers—Frères Cordonniers. Henry Michael Buch was born of poor parents early in the seventeenth century at Erlon, in Luxembourg, and was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and early set before him SS. Crispin and Crispinian as examples of doing all work to God. He spent much of his leisure in prayer, in visiting the sick in hospitals and in their own houses, in rescuing wild boys and restoring them to their parents, in saving dissolute apprentices and

For not only as patrons of shoemakers may we think of Crispin and Crispinian, but as leaders of all co-operative labour, setting a saintly and royal stamp on all faithful work of the hands, heralds of a day when all men may be not lowered to a monotonous level, but lifted on different levels to infinite varieties of soil and aspect and climate, as in the mountain ranges, by each doing his best, and by all receiving their due; when all work may be ennobled by being done to the One Father, and for all the brothers, and therefore done well.[1]

reconciling them to their masters. Often he lived on bread and water, and would give his own food and clothes to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Some of the tailors hearing the hymns and songs of praise of the shoemakers Henry had associated with him, and seeing their good and peaceful lives, founded a similar guild of their own. Henry was much honoured by the excellent Baron de Renty.

[1] In the sixth century a basilica was dedicated to them at Soissons, where they were buried. Represented shoemaking, with shoemaker's tools or strips of hide, or with a cornucopia full of boots and shoes.

St. Blaise, Bishop and Martyr, Patron of Wool-combers

OF ARMENIA.

February 3.

(Martyred A.D. 316. In all the Calendars. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: Heb. v. 1–6; St. Matt. x. 26–32.)

The martyr stories once more return to the East, and we find ourselves at large in the open country of allegory and legend, where the history as well as the beauty of the story seems best learned not from a narrative feebly clipped into a semblance of history, but from the most popular form of the legend most frankly and simply told.[1]

St. Blaise was born at Sebaste, in Armenia, the child of wealthy parents. Gentle and modest from his childhood, he grew in favour with God and man. When he grew up he especially studied medicine, being always full of longing to help all kinds of sickness and suffering. All the people loved him, and he was elected bishop.

He loved to retire to solitary places among the mountains, not so much for their solitude as because of their beauty and the companionship of the wild creatures, birds and beasts, who were at home there, and grew to be at home with him. He used often to retire alone to a cave in Mount Argus, near the city. There the wild beasts of the neighbourhood came to him every day to pay him homage, and to receive his blessing and be cured of their diseases. If he was at his prayers when they arrived they never interrupted him, but waited till he had finished, but never were content to go away without having in some way taken courteous leave of him.

Agricola, governor of Cappadocia and of Lesser Armenia

[1] Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, also *Les Petits Bollandistes*, Alban Butler, Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*.

under the Emperor Licinius, having come to Sebaste, began by the commands of his master to persecute the flock of Jesus Christ like a cruel and famished wolf, whilst the wolves themselves were licking the feet of Blaise, their shepherd This wicked judge, not wishing to spare any of the Christians he had thrown into prison, determined to kill them all at once by exposing them to the wild beasts in the arena.

To accomplish this he sent his people into the forests to capture lions and other fierce beasts. But it came to pass that as they were surrounding Mount Argus they came to the cave where Blaise lived, and found around him a great number of lions, tigers, bears, wolves, and other similar animals who kept him company.

Surprised at this adventure, they entered further into the cavern, and finding the saint seated, rapt in meditation on the greatness of God, they were still more astonished, and returned to the town to make known to the governor what they had seen. What they told him led him to send more soldiers to this mountain, to hunt out the Christians and to bring back all they could find. The soldiers therefore went there, and having found St. Blaise, who was praying and praising our Lord, they told him what the governor demanded. The saint answered joyously, 'My children, you are welcome. I have long sighed for your coming. Let us go in the Name of God.'

On his way to the town a poor woman came to him and laid at his feet her only child, who was dying from swallowing a bone.

'O servant of Christ,' she cried, 'have mercy on me.' And Blaise had pity, and he laid his hand on the child's heart and prayed, and restored him, cured, to his mother. Then another poor woman came and besought his help. She had no property in the world but one pig, which a wolf had carried off. This was naturally no difficulty at all to Blaise, the friend of wolves and all wild creatures. He told the poor woman to be of good cheer ; her pig should be restored to her ; and having given his orders to the wolf, the pig was at once brought back.

It seems rather a prosaic conclusion to this story that the good woman afterwards killed this miraculously rescued pig and brought it to Blaise in the form of pork when he was perishing of hunger in the dungeon.

As soon as Blaise and his companions reached the city of Sebaste the governor had them thrown into prison, and the next day summoned him to his presence. 'I am charmed to see you, Blaise,' he said, 'dear friend of the immortal gods.'

'God keep you, O governor,' replied Blaise. 'But give not the name of gods to those miserable spirits who can do you no good.'

The governor, enraged, had the Bishop beaten with a stick for two or three hours ; but he continued joyful in the midst of the suffering, and only said (apparently to the devil), 'O senseless deceiver of souls, dost thou think to separate me from God by torments? No, no ; the Lord is with me. It is He who strengthens me. Do with me therefore what thou wilt.'

One instrument of his torture was a sharp comb, such as wool is carded with. At last he was beheaded.

Several Christian women and little children were martyred with him.

These women, being ordered to sacrifice to the gods, said they would first take them to a neighbouring lake and wash them, that the offering might be purer. The governor, pleased at their apparent submission, acquiesced and gave them the idols, which they caused to be taken and thrown to the bottom of the lake.

The women were then burned to death, the little Christian children encouraging their mothers to die.

Then the governor threw Blaise into the lake where the idols had sunk ; but he made the sign of the Cross and walked tranquilly on the waters, and sat on them as on a throne. The waves, like the wild beasts, recognised the servant of Christ as their master and their friend. But the officers of the cruel governor essaying to do the same were drowned. At last the Bishop floated back to the shore of the lake

radiant in dazzling light ; and Agricola, the governor, seeing that all efforts to subdue him by torture were vain, had him beheaded.

There are three churches dedicated in his name in England; and at Bradford, in Yorkshire, to this day a festival is held every seven years, where Prince Jason, of the Golden Fleece, and Princess Medea, with Bishop Blaise and his chaplain, walk in procession.

In Ruinart's 'Acta Sincera Martyrum' merely his name is given, as one who is said to have suffered under the governor Agricola ; but his name occurs early in all the Calendars. And surely underneath all this rich tangle of legend is hidden some beautiful helpful life, trusted by children and by animals and beloved by all. One day, perhaps, we shall know the true story, and find it richer and greater than the legend.[1]

[1] In art represented as a bishop with crosier and book, and with wool and comb, or torch and taper, restoring a dead pig ; birds bringing him food.

St. George, Patron of England and of Soldiers.

April 23.

(Martyred A.D. 303. Called 'Our Lady's Knight,' and by the Greek Church the 'Great Martyr and Trophy-Bearer.' April 23. In all the Calendars. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : St. James i. 2–12 ; St. John xv. 1–7.)

The legend of St. George also comes to us from the East. The Greek Church honours him as the Great Martyr, Captain of the Noble Army of Martyrs.

His 'cult' began very early. Constantine built a church in his name only twenty years after his death.

In the West his apocryphal legend was not accepted, and was in fact repudiated from the offices of the Church by Pope Gelasius in 494, when he reformed the Calendar. It was then decided that St. George should be placed among those saints 'whose names are justly reverenced among men, but whose actions are known only to God.'[1] But his 'cult' was especially promoted in England by Richard Cœur de Lion, who invoked his name in his crusading wars in Palestine.

The 'Petits Bollandistes' give his legend thus :—

St. George came into the world at Diospolis (280), or Lydda, in Palestine. His parents were rich, and good Christians. His father was in the Emperor Diocletian's service ; the education of George was therefore entrusted to his mother.

At the age of seventeen George embraced the profession

[1] In one book of devout meditations (Challoner) the meditations on St. George are given under three heads to this effect :—

'1. It is clear no one *does* know anything about St. George.

'2. It is clear no one *can* know anything about St. George.

'3. It is, therefore, good to meditate on him as one of those hidden saints who, although unknown to man, are glorious before God.'

of arms ; the loyal services of the father, who had lately died, were recompensed in the son. George, moreover, had beauty of person and much intelligence, and was of an exquisite courtesy. He pleased the Emperor Diocletian, who quickly raised him from rank to rank and made him military tribune of his guards.

One day when 'the Cæsar Diocletian,' much devoted to Apollo, was consulting the god on an affair of much importance to the State, from the dark depths of his cave, it is said, a voice came forth in reply : 'The just who are on the earth prevent my telling the truth. By them the inspiration of the Sacred Tripod is reduced to a lie.'

Full of consternation, the Emperor asked who were these just ones, and one of the priests of Apollo answered, 'Prince, they are the Christians.' And thus the persecution, which had begun to relent, was rekindled.

From the first the cruelties against the Christians, and the decree of the Senate ordering them, excited the indignation of the young soldier, and he boldly denounced these cruel edicts against his brethren. In vain did his friends recommend him to be prudent and recall to him the favours of the Emperor. He knew well that his own call to confess and suffer might come at any moment ; and so he distributed his money and wardrobe among the poor, at once set free the slaves who were with him, and left directions to provide for those who were absent.

Thus prepared for death, George approached the Emperor, and himself pleaded for the innocent Christians, demanding as the least that could be granted them liberty, 'since this liberty could hurt none.'

'Young man,' was all Diocletian's reply, 'think of thine own future.'

But as he was about to reply the benevolence of the tyrant changed to fury. The guards were commanded to take him to prison ; he was thrown on the ground, his feet placed in the stocks, and an enormous stone laid on his chest. But the blessed one, always patient in the midst of his tortures, ceased not to give thanks to God.

The next day he was stretched on a wheel with sharp spokes. But a voice from heaven came to comfort him and said, 'George, fear nothing, for I am with thee.' And also there appeared to him a Man brighter than the sun, clothed in a white robe, who stretched out his hand to embrace him and encourage him in his anguish. Two of the prætors who saw it were converted and gave their lives for Christ.

The Emperor, seeing the constancy of George, once more sought to move him by entreaties. But this generous confessor would no more reply in words, but in deeds, and demanded to go to the temple to see the gods Diocletian worshipped. The Emperor, believing that at length George was coming to himself and was about to yield, caused the Senate and people to be assembled, that all might be present at the grand sacrifice George would offer.

Then the eyes of all being fixed on him to see what he would do, he drew near the idol of Apollo; and stretching out his hand and making the sign of the Cross, he said, 'Wouldst thou that I should offer thee sacrifices as to a god?'

The demon who was in the statue made answer, 'I am not God, and there is no other God but Him whom thou preachest.'

At the same hour were heard horrible wailing sounds coming out of the mouths of the idols, and they all at last fell crumbling into dust.

Then the priests of the temple conjured the people to lay hands on the martyr, crying to the Emperor that he must rid himself of this magician and cut off his head.

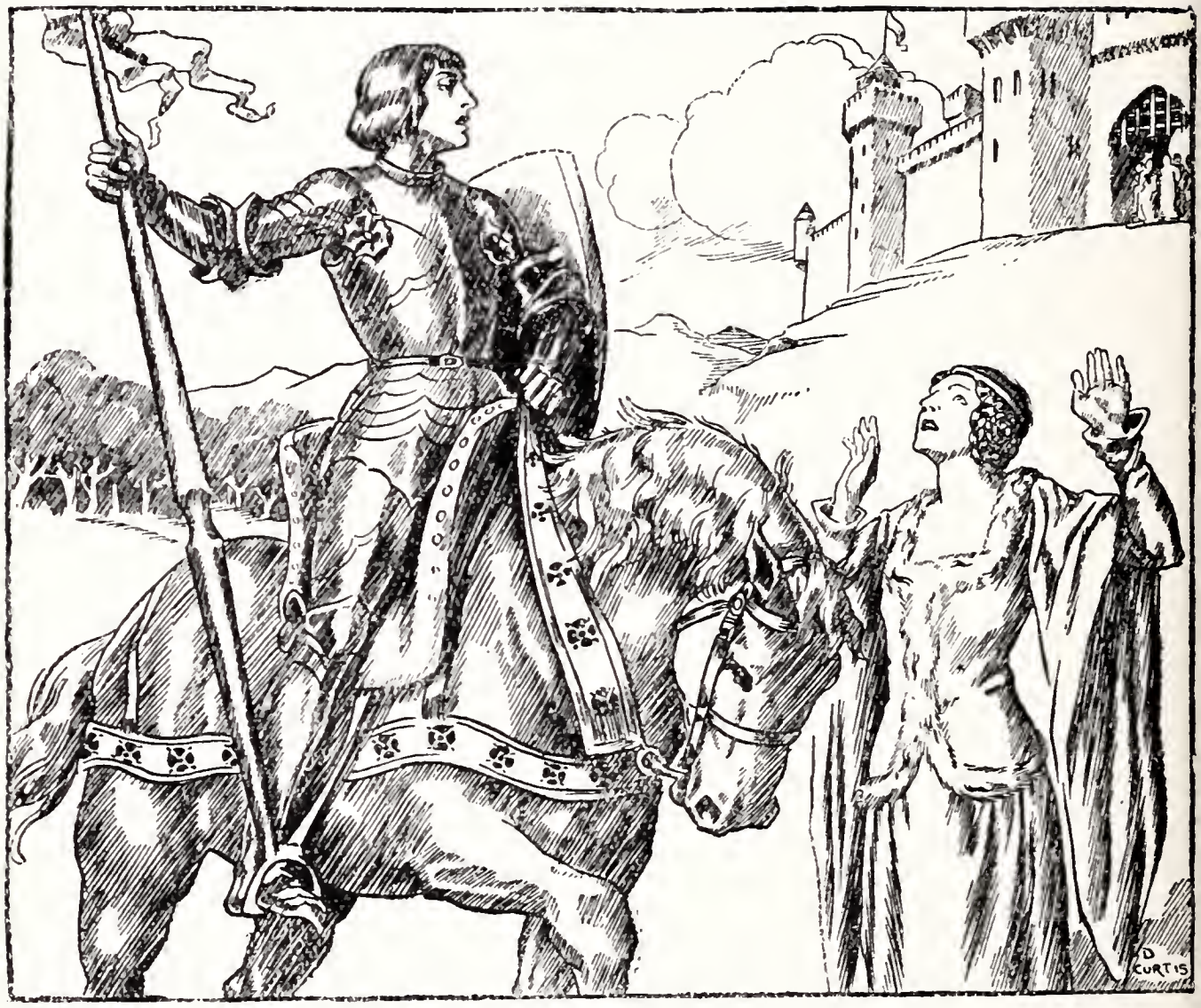
He was therefore taken to the place of execution, and, having said his prayers, was beheaded, April 28, A.D. 303.

The 'Petits Bollandistes' do not give the dragon story, saying it is an allegory.

But St. George cannot be left without his dragon.

The more popular legend[1] is that St. George on his

[1] Mrs. Jameson, Rev. S. B. Gould, and others, chiefly drawn from the *Golden Legend*.



ST. GEORGE AND THE PRINCESS.

Facing p. 135.

knightly travels came to a certain city in Libya, called Silene. The inhabitants of this city were in great trouble and consternation in conseqnence of the ravages of a monstrous dragon, which issued from a neighbouring lake or marsh and devoured the flocks and herds of the people, who had taken refuge within the walls; and to prevent him from approaching the city, the air of which was poisoned by his pestiferous breath, they offered him daily two sheep; and when the sheep were exhausted they were forced to sacrifice to him two of their children daily, to save the rest. The children were all taken by lot (all under the age of fifteen), and the whole city was filled with mourning, with the lamentations of bereaved parents and the cries of the innocent victims.

Now the king of the city had one daughter exceedingly fair, and her name was Cleodolinda. And after some time, when many people had perished, the lot fell upon her, and the monarch, in his despair, offered all his gold and treasures, and even the half of his kingdom, to redeem her; but the people murmured, saying, 'Is this just, O king, that thou by thine own edict hast made us desolate, and behold now thou wouldst withhold thine own child?'

And they waxed more and more wroth, and threatened to burn him in his palace unless the princess was delivered up.

Then the king submitted, and asked only a delay of eight days to bewail her fate, which was granted; and at the end of eight days the princess, being clothed in her royal robes, was led forth as a victim for sacrifice; and she fell at her father's feet and asked his blessing, saying that she was ready to die for her people; and then, amid tears and lamentations, she was put forth, and the gates were shut against her.

Slowly she walked towards the dwelling of the dragon, the path being drearily strewn with the bones of former victims, and she wept as she went on her way.

Now at this time St. George was passing by, mounted on his good steed, and being moved to see so beautiful a virgin in tears, he paused to ask her why she wept. She told him, and he said, 'Fear not, for I will deliver you.'

And she replied, 'Oh, noble youth, tarry not here, lest thou perish with me ; but fly, I beseech thee.'

But St. George would not, and he said, 'God forbid that I should fly. I will lift my hand against this loathly thing, and I will deliver thee through the power of Jesus Christ.'

At that moment the monster was seen emerging from his lair, half crawling, half flying towards them. Then the virgin princess trembled exceedingly and cried out, 'Fly, I beseech thee, brave knight, and leave me here to die.'

But he answered not ; only making the sign of the Cross and calling on the name of the Redeemer, he spurred towards the dragon, and after a terrible and prolonged combat he pinned him to the earth with his lance.

Then he desired the princess to bring her girdle, and he bound the dragon fast, and gave the girdle into her hand, and the subdued monster crawled after them like a dog.

In this guise they approached the city. The people being greatly terrified, St. George called out to them, saying, 'Fear nothing ; only believe in that God through whose might I have conquered this adversary, and be baptised, and I will destroy him before your eyes.'

So the king and the people believed and were baptised —twenty thousand people in one day.

Then St. George slew the dragon and cut off his head ; and the king bestowed great rewards and treasures on the victorious knight. But he distributed all to the poor, and kept nothing, and went on his way and came to Palestine.

At that time the edict of the Emperor Diocletian was published, and it was affixed to the gates of the temples and in the public markets ; and men read it with terror and hid their faces. But St. George, when he saw it, was filled with indignation ; the spirit of courage from on high came upon him and he tore it down and trampled it under his feet. Whereupon he was seized and carried before Dacian, the proconsul, and condemned to suffer during eight days the most cruel tortures.

And when Dacian saw that St. George was not to be vanquished by torments he called to his aid a certain en-

chanter, who after invoking his demons mingled strong poison with a cup of wine and presented it to the saint. He having made the sign of the Cross, and recommended himself to God, drank it off without injury. When the magician saw the miracle he fell at the feet of the saint and declared himself a Christian. Immediately the wicked judge caused the enchanter to be beheaded ; and St. George was bound upon a wheel full of sharp blades, but the wheel was broken by two angels who descended from heaven. Thereupon they flung him into a cauldron of boiling lead ; and when they believed that they had subdued him by the force of torments they brought him to a temple to assist at the sacrifice, and the people ran in crowds to behold his humiliation, and the priests mocked him. But St. George knelt down and prayed, and thunder and lightning from heaven fell upon the temple and destroyed it and the idols ; and the priests and many people were crushed beneath the ruins, as at the prayer of Samson in ancient times. Then Dacian, seized with rage and terror, commanded that the Christian knight should be beheaded. He bent his neck to the sword of the executioner and received bravely and thankfully the stroke of death

And so he shone for ages, the Perseus of Christendom, scorning earthly rewards as well as earthly torments ; the conqueror of the dragon, the liberator of the maiden from death, and of the city from heathenism ; yet not ending, as the conquerors of old, by a joyful marriage with the rescued maiden and the inheritance of the kingdom. From the victory over the slain dragon, from the fair princess, from the city at his feet, he passes on to another combat and another victory, but this time a victory won through torture and humiliation. So deeply had the Cross stamped itself on the heart of the Church that she could not crown her young victor on those lower levels.[1]

So he stands for ever before the young manhood of

[1] There is, however, also a legend on a lower level of his appearing at the head of an army, as one of the 'Seven Champions of Christendom,' a glorious celestial knight, and of a great victory won over a Moslem host.

Christendom, one of its great champions, the type of courage shown in brave intercession for the oppressed; of purity, not merely spotless in whiteness, firm to endure, but fiery, with chivalrous manhood, mighty to save; true soldier of Christ, rewarded for victory in one combat by being sent forth to another harder fight—the martyr soldier, whose order and decoration is not a crown but a cross.[1]

[1] Dedication of churches, 162. Represented in art, as an armed knight, standing, or on horseback, fighting a dragon with a spear; a cross on his armour and shield.

St. Valentine, Bishop[1] and Martyr[2]

OF ROME.

February 14.

(Martyred A.D. 270. In all the Calendars. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: Ecclus. xxxi. 8–11; St. Matt. xvi. 24–28.)

St. Valentine was a priest in Rome in the reign of the Emperor Claudius II. His good deeds, and especially his generous care of the martyrs, caused him to be widely known. He was brought before the Emperor, who asked him why he did not worship the gods. 'If you, sire, knew the gift of God,' was the reply, 'you would abandon the worship of these impure beings, and you and your empire would be happy.' One of the judges asked what he thought of Jupiter and Mercury, and Valentine replied that they seemed to have spent their time in low pleasures. The Emperor seemed moved by Valentine's eloquence and courage, so that the prefect of the city said to him, 'Shall we forsake the religion of our ancestors?' whereupon Claudius, dreading sedition, gave Valentine up to the prefect, who placed him under the charge of the judge Asterius, whose house became his prison. On entering the house, Valentine, intent, not on his own peril, but on saving all he could, prayed that God would make those who were still in the darkness of heathenism know Jesus Christ to be the Light of the world. Asterius heard him. 'How,' he asked, 'dost thou say that Jesus Christ is the True Light?' 'Not only the True Light,' replied Valentine, 'but the only Light, who lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'

'If this be so,' said Asterius, 'I will now test it. I have a little adopted daughter who has been blind for two years; if you can restore her sight, I will believe that Jesus Christ is the Light and is God, and I will do all thou sayest.'

[1] In some Calendars priest.

[2] In art represented as a priest with a sword.

Then they brought the young girl to Valentine, and he laid his hands on her eyes and said, 'Lord Jesus Christ, who art the True Light, enlighten this Thy servant.' At these words the child received sight, and Asterius and his wife threw themselves at the feet of Valentine and entreated him, since through him they had attained to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to tell them what they must do to be saved. He commanded them to break all their idols in pieces, to fast three days, to forgive all who had injured them, and then to be baptised. Asterius did all this ; set free all the Christians in his keeping, and was baptised with all his household of forty-six persons.

These new Christians almost immediately proved their faith by martyrdom ; and soon Valentine, their father and master, after being thrown into a dungeon and beaten with rods, followed these his children to Christ.

A church was built in his honour near the Ponte Mole, in Rome, and the gate now called the Porta del Popolo, near this church, was long called after the martyr, the Gate of Valentine.

He is regarded as the patron of young girls, and a pagan festival to Juno for boys and girls occurring about the time of his martyrdom was intended to be transformed through his patronage, and was called by his name, St. Valentine's Day.

St. Sylvester, Bishop of Rome.

New Year's Eve.

(Died A.D. 335. In all the Calendars. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: 1 Ecclus. i. 1, 4, 5–12, 15, 21–23; St. Matt. xxv. 14–23.)

ALTHOUGH not among the martyrs it seems for some reasons best to place the legends of St. Sylvester and of St. Nicholas next to those of St. George and St. Valentine.

Although both no doubt historical, having made by real life that deep incision in the history of Christendom which imagination afterwards made a fountain of romantic story, it is by their legends rather than by their histories that they are known.

St. Sylvester is called a confessor.

Historically he bridges over the period between the last persecution of the Church under Diocletian and its triumph under Constantine.

Legends (and also the forged decretals) connect him with Constantine. He was the son of Rufinus and Justina, early taught by a Christian mother. In his youth he delighted to minister to the pilgrims who came to the various sacred shrines at Rome, washing their feet, serving them at table, and caring for them in every way.

One of these, Timotheus of Antioch, was martyred, and Sylvester is said to have been himself thrown into prison by the pagan prefect of Rome, not so much for his Christian faith as from a rumour that the wealth of Timotheus, reported to be great, had fallen into the hands of Sylvester.

He seems therefore to have been almost in the ranks of the 'Noble Army.' The days of imperial persecution were, however, over for ever. Sylvester seems to have had much influence over the life of Constantine, which embodied itself

in a tradition that he baptised the Emperor. He certainly induced the Emperor to build basilicas and churches and to destroy pagan statues and temples. The great basilica of the Lateran was, it is said, begun at his suggestion. He also made many regulations as to ritual, the consecration of churches, the order of baptism, and the period of ordination.

And for many centuries it was believed that the famous donation of Constantine, the foundation of the papal claims to the temporalities, was made to him.

He was Pope for twenty-one years, died on December 31, 335, and was buried in the Cemetery of Priscilla, on the Salarian Way, a mile from Rome.

The incidents by which he is commemorated in Christian art are taken from his legend.

He is represented, first, translating the body of St. Peter to a place in the church called the Confession of St. Peter; baptising Constantine; binding the jaws of a dragon in the midst of flames; standing in the act of benediction; or on his knees, before an Apostle holding a cross, in allusion to the invention of the Holy Cross by the Empress Helena in his time.

The chief incidents in his legend are these two, both full of allegorical significance.

According to the legendary 'Acta' Sylvester was compelled by the persecution of the pagan magistrates of Rome to take refuge in a cave near Soracte.

Constantine having defeated his pagan colleagues, Maximin and Licinius, came to Rome, and was there smitten with leprosy and elephantiasis. The remedy for this dreadful disease was a bath in the blood of several little children. A number of the little helpless victims were collected. But when the Emperor was being drawn in his chariot to the place where this bath was to be prepared, the mothers threw themselves before him, weeping and entreating for mercy on their babes. Touched with compassion for the mothers of the babes, the Emperor at once relinquished the purpose, and with it the hope of recovery. 'Better I

should die,' he said, 'than cause these innocents to perish. Let the children be spared;' and the Emperor went back to his palace with the leprosy still on him. But, in the night, God, moved by this act of mercy of the pagan Emperor, sent to him the two blessed Apostles Peter and Paul. They stretched their hands over him and said, 'Because thou hast feared to shed innocent blood Jesus Christ has sent us to bring thee good counsel. Send to Sylvester, who lives hidden in Mount Soracte, and he shall show thee a font, in which having washed three times thou shalt be clean of thy leprosy; and henceforth thou shalt adore the God of the Christians.'

Then Constantine awoke and sent his soldiers in search of Sylvester. And when they took him he supposed it was to lead him to death. Nevertheless he went cheerfully with them and was led into the presence of the Emperor. And when Constantine saw him he saluted him and said, 'I would know of thee who are those two gods who appeared to me in the night.' And Sylvester said, 'They are not gods; they are Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Then Sylvester showed the Emperor the images of the Apostles, and Constantine said they were the same who had appeared to him in the vision.

Then Sylvester baptised him, and he came out of the font with his flesh fresh as that of a little child.

The second story from the legend is that once the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, having a leaning to the religion of the Jews, commanded that the wisest rabbis should come to Rome, that Sylvester might meet them in debate. Two Greek philosophers, Crato and Zeno, were appointed arbitrators.

The Jewish rabbis were defeated by Sylvester's arguments, but one of them, being a magician, defied Sylvester to a trial of the power of the gods. 'Dost thou know the name of the Ineffable,' he said, 'that Name which no creature can hear and live? I know it. Let them bring me a wild bull, the fiercest to be found, and when I have uttered that Name in his ear he will fall dead.'

Then they brought in a fierce bull, which it took over one hundred men to restrain. And when Zambri, the magician, had whispered the awful Name in his ear, he fell dead.

Then the Jews triumphed and would have slain Sylvester; the two Greek philosophers were perplexed, and even Constantine was staggered.

Only Sylvester was unmoved. He said quietly, 'The name which Zambri has pronounced must be the name of the devil, not of God; for *Christ our Redeemer came not to kill but to make alive.* Men and wild beasts, lions, tigers, and serpents can *kill.* If Zambri's power is from God, let him *restore to life* the creature he has slain.' Thereupon the judges commanded Zambri to restore the bull to life; but he could not. Then Sylvester made the sign of the Cross and commanded the bull to rise and go in peace. And the bull rose up, as gentle and tame as a beast used to the yoke. Then all the Jews and the Greeks, and all others who were there, convinced by this miracle of mercy, believed and were baptised.

The third incident of the legend is that after the baptism of the Emperor Constantine the pagan priests came in a body and complained to him. 'Most sacred Emperor, since you have embraced the Christian faith the great dragon that dwelleth in the moat has destroyed every day 300 men by his envenomed breath.' The Emperor consulted Sylvester, who said, 'Only have faith and I will subdue this beast.' Then he went down 142 steps into the moat, and exorcised the dragon in the name of Him who was born of a virgin, was crucified and buried, and rose from the dead. And then he closed the mouth of the dragon and with a thread bound it round, twisting the thread three times and sealing it with the Cross. And so the people were delivered at once from the dragon and from the idols.

Three glorious Christian truths to be embodied in one legend. The Emperor choosing to sacrifice himself rather than the children. He that loseth his life shall save it, saved body and soul by the sacrifice.

The miracles of Christ miracles of life, not of destruction. The mighty dragon bound with the feeble thread, held by the hand of him that dares to resist, and sealed with the cross he not only signs, but himself bears.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: one at Chevelstone, Devon. In art represented as a pope baptising Constantine; and also with a bull. The 'St. Sylvester Festival' is still the popular name in Germany for New Year's Eve.

St. Nicholas[1]

Of Myra.

December 6.

(Died circa A.D. 343. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: Ecclus. xliv. 17–23; xlv. 5, 7, 15, 16; St. Matt. xxv. 14–23.)

One of the few saints whose name is in all the Calendars, whose praise is in all the Churches, the patron of the little children, of friendless maidens, the saint of the people, or the oppressed, and of strangers, the 'Santa Claus' of the children, of sailors, of scholars; chief patron of Russia; with more churches dedicated to him than any Saint in the Calendar. In England there is said scarcely to be a town without a church dedicated in his name.

St. John Chrysostom calls him 'father of the friendless and standard of the faith;' St. Peter Damian, 'the joy of the aged, the glory of the young, the light of priests.'

Justinian built a church in his name at Constantinople, A.D. 560, 200 years after his death.

Such a memory of graciousness, gentleness, insight into sin and sorrow, and power to succour has that life shed forth east and west, north and south, bearing witness to the presence of a real star at the heart of the prismatic halo of quaint wild legend which is all we see of it.

The date of his life is the beginning of the fourth century, and he is said to have been imprisoned and tortured in the persecutions of Diocletian and Maximin, and afterwards to have been among the confessors who appeared, with their glorious scars, at the Council of Nicæa.

In Greece, Russia, and the East generally his name was

[1] Also called St. Nicholas of Bari, on account of the translation of his body from Myra to Bari, in the Neapolitan territory, by a daring band of Neapolitan sailors, after Mahomedanism had swept over Asia. The boy-bishop pageants of the Middle Ages began on St. Nicholas' Day and lasted till 'Childermas,' or Holy Innocents' Day.

always honoured from the date of his life and death. His legend appeared in the West in the tenth century.

These are some of the incidents of his legend :—

He was born at Panthea, in Lycia. Like St. John the Baptist, he was the child of his parents' old age.

As soon as he was born he at once stood upright, and, turning eastward and looking upwards, joined his baby hands in prayer. He knew how to fast as soon as he knew how to feed, and kept the fasts of Wednesday and Friday.

His parents died when he was a boy. He at once embraced the command, as if given directly to him, to sell all his inheritance, which was large, and give it to the poor. His wants were few indeed, for after his ordination as a priest he never tasted wine or flesh ; he went barefoot, and his couch was a plank, or the bare earth.

He did not distribute his possessions at random, but carefully watched where the need was greatest and then gave succour.

Among his countless other works of mercy one is recorded in all the legends and painted in all the pictures of his life.

A nobleman of the city, who had three fair young daughters, had fallen into misery so abject that he saw no way for his children to exist but through a life of sin. St. Nicholas heard of this, and putting together in three portions money enough to apportion each of the maidens, he determined to rescue them.

Desiring not to be known in his good deeds, he went one night secretly to their house, found a window open, and the wretched father sitting weeping inside ; the young maidens meanwhile peacefully sleeping, unaware of the perils that threatened them.

St. Nicholas threw one of the portions, in a money bag, in at the window and crept noiselessly away. The father took it up, and at once gave a dowry to one of the maidens.

The next night the saint came again to the window. threw in another money bag, and crept away unobserved.

The third night he tried to do the same, but the father, who was watching to learn his benefactor, found him out, threw himself at his feet in an ecstasy of gratitude for his children and in an agony of penitence for his own sinful distrust.[1]

The uncle of the saint, also called Nicholas, was Archbishop of Myra, and, greatly honouring his nephew, he founded a monastery near the city, of which he made Nicholas abbot.

At this uncle's death Nicholas desired to retire into the deserts, to perfect himself amongst the 'anchorites' in solitude. But it was revealed to him in a vision that he was to stay amongst the multitudes and be the shepherd of the people and their saint.

He made a voyage to Egypt and the Holy Land, and saw St. Anthony and the Fathers of the Desert, but, obedient to the heavenly vision, resisted his longing to live amongst them. On this voyage a fearful storm arose and all was given up for lost, when at his prayers the storm became calm and all were saved, one sailor who had fallen overboard being restored to life. Hence St. Nicholas is also the patron of sailors.

He visited the sacred places of Palestine, bathed with his tears the soil of Gethsemane and Calvary, always, in the Holy Land, walking barefoot and bareheaded, and often creeping on his knees for reverence and tender gratitude and love.

In the cave where the Virgin and St. Joseph and the Child Jesus were said to have spent a night on the flight into Egypt he stayed many hours, and when he died a church was built over it in his name.

Then he quietly returned to his monastery at Myra, to the great joy of his monks. And soon after he was elected Archbishop. His election came about in this wise: A good old priest had been told in a dream that the first who entered the church on the morning of the election was the man designed by God to be Archbishop. Nicholas as usual,

[1] Therefore three purses or three golden balls are the symbols of St. Nicholas in art, as in the Ansidei Madonna of Raphael.

spending most of his nights in prayer, was the first to be at the door of the church in the morning, and he was chosen, to the great joy of all the city.

Then soon after his election a dreadful famine laid all the region waste. Other incidents among those commonly rendered in the pictures of his life are connected with this famine.

It was told St. Nicholas, to whom the sorrows of his flock were always his own, that a merchant with corn ships was waiting in one of the ports of Sicily, not having decided where to sell his corn.

In a dream, St. Nicholas appeared to him, telling him of the great profits he might reap by bringing his corn to Myra, and placing three gold pieces under his pillow as a pledge.

In the morning the merchant found the three gold pieces under his pillow, and hastened at once to Myra with his corn ships. But the famine still continuing, St. Nicholas induced the owners of some other corn ships who were on their way to Constantinople, where their corn was already due, to sell a portion to his people, promising them that the amount should not fall short when they reached their destination. They believed him, sold him a portion of the grain, and found when they came to the market at Constantinople their cargo undiminished, according to his promise.

Another terrible consequence of the famine was that an innkeeper near the city was tempted to murder children, place their bodies in a salting-pan, and serve them to his guests.

One day St. Nicholas was passing, and the voices of the murdered little ones cried to him from the cellar where they had been laid.

He went down to them at once, and at the prayer and words of faith these children stood up alive and whole and gave thanks to God and their deliverer, St. Nicholas.

Two incidents also are given showing the union of fire with his gentleness, that he also was a son of thunder as well as a son of consolation. One is the tradition that he

was so indignant with Arius the heretic, at the Council of Nicæa, that he dealt him a heavy blow on the jaw

The other is the story of his rushing to the place of execution to deliver two innocent men who had been unjustly condemned to death. Finding the victims on their knees, their eyes bandaged, ready to receive the fatal blow, St. Nicholas stopped the executioner, took away his sword, sent for the judge, reproved him for his mercenary cruelty, in virtue of his authority as bishop reversed his sentence, and sent the unjustly condemned men to their homes free and rejoicing.

And so this gracious vision of the protector of the weak and the oppressed, with a fire of indignation in his heart against all injustice and a tender glow of pity for all the suffering, shone on the toiling people through the stormy medieval days of oppression and tumult and of the rule of the strongest.

East and West, North and South, innocent little children at their Christmas festivals, brave men in peril on the sea, maidens in worse peril at home, saw shining on them this vision of mercy and charity and homely kindness and sympathy with common joys and sorrows, this Saint of the People, disciple, and reflection of the gracious light of Him who took the little children in His arms, proclaimed the opening of the prison to them that are bound, stilled the storms of Galilee; of Him of Whom it is said that 'the common people heard Him gladly.'[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 372. In art represented with three children in a tub or kneeling before him, with three golden balls or purses, with an anchor or a ship in the distance.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LEGENDS OF THE VIRGIN MARTYRS.

In the Church of St. Apollinaris at Ravenna the mosaic of the stately procession of the Virgin Martyrs fills one side of the great basilica, ending in the manger where they cast down their crowns before the Infant Saviour in the arms of His Virgin Mother.

On the other side the men of the martyr host are seen advancing towards the enthroned Redeemer, sitting in majesty between the grand forms of the 'angels that excel in strength.'

For twelve hundred years those stately forms have looked down unchanged on the changing worshippers beneath them. When those mosaics were fresh the saints represented in them had but lately fought the good fight and passed away. Scarcely a century elapsed between the martyrdom of St. Cæcilia, St. Agnes, St. Agatha, and St. Lucy, and their being enshrined in the basilica at Ravenna ; scarcely a longer interval than between ourselves and the French Revolution with the saintly heroine Madame Elizabeth.

Legend has grown luxuriantly around those early martyrs since; but that the men and women whose names those mosaics commemorate lived, confessed their Lord, and died for their confession, is certainly no dream.

Those stately figures are strangely typical of their stories even as legend has expanded it.

Alike, with a majestic monotony, like the ancient chants which resounded through the church around them, there is yet a delicate variety, when we examine carefully, which

breaks the sameness with individual distinctness They stand before us types of many kinds of womanly endurance and womanly character.

Yet, it must be admitted, of womanhood in one aspect; courageous and pure and self-sacrificing, full of high aspiration and devotion, they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; they banish by their presence the earthly and sensual gods and goddesses they denied and dethroned.

But of all that side of womanhood which creates homes, not a trace is here. For this we must go back further, to Bethany, and the mothers who brought their little children to the Lord. These stories glorify not so much the great virtue of chastity, which is for all human creatures, as the circumstance of celibacy, which cannot be for all.

And, however this assertion by living and dying of a high, independent feminine ideal, devoted to the service of no one special family, but to God and to all humanity for His sake, may have been needed to quench the evil fires which so consumed the corrupt Roman world, it is well not to forget that the medieval popular secular poetry, which grew up beside the medieval popular sacred legends, too often glorified not the passionate purity of married love, but the romance and devotion of unlawful passion. It cannot but be at great risk that any ideal is set higher than the Divine creation of the family.

And this we cannot but bear in mind, as we reverently approach the four great Virgin Martyrs of the Latin Church, and the two great Virgin Patronesses, who, with the less known maiden Fides and the child Prisca, the martyred child, constitute the feminine side of our Anglican martyrology. Moreover it may help us, to think of the hidden saints whose lives so often are the foundation of those we see.

The glorious maiden martyrs Cæcilia and Agnes and Agatha and Lucy had mothers and fathers, who taught them the faith for which they suffered, and when for the faith they had taught, their children died, *suffered with them*, inevitably, and also rejoiced with them, encouraging

them to be faithful unto death, yielding them up willingly like the blessed Mother who stood by the cross.

'Only my father' (he being a heathen still), said Perpetua, 'of all my family *will be unable to rejoice at my death.*' *And her mother was living.*

If we compare the saints with the stars, are not the stars we see like our own sun, globes of fiery vapour, spending themselves in giving forth light and heat to others, whilst the worlds around them, illuminated by these suns, the abodes of life, inhabited earths, where the human history goes on, must be invisible? And so perhaps it may be in a measure in the spiritual heavens. Each burning, fiery, light-giving star may involve a family of illumined inhabited worlds, homes of life and love, with all their moral conflicts and victories.

St. Caecilia[1]

OF ROME.

November 22.

(Martyred circa A.D. 280. In all the Calendars. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Ecclus. xli. 9–12 ; St. Matt. xiii. 44–52.)

St. Cæcilia 'came of Romans and of noble kind,' of the family of the Cæcilii, descended from Caia Cæcilia Tanaquil, wife of Tarquin the Elder, a family illustrious through high achievements, its members being distinguished by their conquests over various races, as Cæcilius Macedonius, Balearicus, Numidicus, Creticus. Of the same house came the Cæcilia Metella whose tomb, erected by her husband, Crassus, is still the most prominent feature of the Appian Way.

From early childhood the faith and love of Christ possessed her heart. Her parents were still pagan, but they loved the gracious, gentle girl, and did not oppose her. They lived, an ancient tradition says, in the Campus Martius, in a palace full of the trophies and pomps of their ancestors. But all the splendour was nothing to her. Underneath her gold-embroidered robes she wore a garment of hair. She, 'heaven's lily,' had her home and palace in paradise.

And all the people saw in her 'the great light of wisdom, the magnanimity of faith,' and sundry works 'bright of excellence.' 'Swift and busy was she in every good work, and round and whole in persevering,' and burning ever in charity full bright.

And from her cradle she was fostered in the faith of

[1] In Ruinart's *Acta Sincera Martyrum* only her *name* is given as among the martyrs early commemorated. Alban Butler gives only a few lines to the story. In *Les Petits Bollandistes* the legend occupies twenty pages, from which, with Chaucer's *St. Cæcilia* and Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, her story, as given here, is taken, the words of the narrative being frequently from Chaucer.

Different dates ; according to the earliest A.D. 170, 180, and 230 ; Greek menology, A.D. 305. She was venerated very early, and her epitaph is probably in one of the catacombs. The legends connecting her with music are later.

Christ, and bare His Gospel in her mind, and never ceased in her prayer to love and dread God, 'beseeching Him to keep her a chaste maiden.'

The Book of the Gospels, hidden under her dress, rested always on her heart. From those words, which are spirit and life, she received a force beyond nature. Underneath her gold-embroidered robe she wore the garment of hair; and she fasted often.

Day and night she lived in hidden communion or in loving service of Him who died for her on the Cross. To Him her whole being was consecrated. She loved to pray in the churches of the catacombs and to celebrate the feasts of the martyrs, and to attend to the needs of His poor, who knew and loved the gentle maiden.

Her voice was of a ravishing sweetness, and she played on all kinds of instruments; but so full was her heart of joy that no instrument could utter it all, and so she invented the organ to pour forth in full tides the gladness of her soul in the praises of God.

In those days martyrdom was always a possibility. The Christians had still often to hide in the catacombs. But to her martyrdom was but a fire-guarded gate of the paradise of her Lord.

At last she was betrothed by her parents to Valerian, young, virtuous, and rich, but a pagan. She was married with all the solemn old Roman rites, in the tunic of pure white wool and with the girdle of white wool (but underneath was the hair garment of penance), and her hair plaited in six tresses like the vestals'.[1] And so this Christian vestal, vowed to Christ, veiled in the flame-coloured veil, was lifted over her husband's threshold into the house which she was to transform into a house of prayer and a house of mercy.

At once she told him of her vow and of the good angel who always guarded her. He listened to her with tender reverence, and asked to see the holy angel; but she told him that to have this granted his eyes must be opened by the well of living waters which springeth up for ever.

[1] *Les Petits Bollandistes.*

'Go,' she said, 'to the Appian Way, that is but three miles from this town, and say to the poor folks there what I shall tell you. Tell them that I, Cæcilia, sent you to them to show you the way to the good Urban the Old; and when you shall see him tell him the words I told you. And when he has purged you from sin then shall you see the angel.'

Urban was much moved when he saw Valerian come thus to him, 'quiet as a lamb with its ewe,' ready to learn. And suddenly a majestic old man, clad in white, shining clothes, appeared to them; and in his hand was a book written with letters of gold. And at first Valerian fell down before him as one dead; but he lifted him up by his hand, and then in this book he began to read of our Lord, and faith, and God, and Christianity, and of the Father of us all above, everywhere, over all.

And when he had read, the old man said, 'Believest thou this thing?'

And Valerian said, 'I believe all this.'

Then the old man vanished, and Urban christened Valerian. And he returned to his house. In their chamber he found Cæcilia, and with her an angel with two crowns, of which he placed one on the head of Cæcilia and one on that of Valerian.

And the angel told him that for his accepting of the will of God as to the vocation of Cæcilia he might ask what he would and it should be given him.

Then Valerian replied, 'I have a brother whom I love as I love no other man. I pray, then, that my brother may have grace to know the truth as I do, in this place.'

The angel, his face radiant with heavenly joy, said, 'God liketh thy request. As Cæcilia has won thy heart thou shalt win thy brother's, and both with the palm of martyrdom shall come into God's blissful rest.'

Then he went back to heaven and left the spouses full of joy, each admiring the crown on the brow of the other.

And scarcely had the angel left when Valerian's brother, Tiburtius, now become also the brother of Cæcilia, came into the room.

ST. CÆCILIA AND THE ANGEL.

Facing p. 156.

And when he smelt the fragrance of their celestial crowns he began to wonder, and said, 'I wonder whence the sweet smell of roses and lilies comes at this time of the year? For if I held them in my hand they could not be sweeter. I find the fragrance in my heart, and it hath changed me into another kind. Is it a dream?'

'All our life till now has been a dream; now we are in the reality,' Valerian replied. 'We have two crowns, snow white and rose red, that shine clearly, which thine eyes have no power to see; but as thou smellest them, through my prayer, so shalt thou see them clear, if without sloth thou wilt believe aright and know the very truth.'

Then he told his brother of the angel and of their Lord; and Cæcilia showed him all, open and plain, and that 'idols are but a vain thing, for they are dumb and also deaf,' and she spoke with such a fervour of eloquence that her voice was as heavenly music; and Tiburtius said, 'He that would not believe what you say would be but a beast.'

And then, full glad that he could see the truth, she embraced him as her brother and said ('this blissful maiden dear'), 'So as the love of Christ made me thy brother's wife, so this day I take thee for my ally.'

And then he also went to Urban, who baptised him 'with a glad heart and light,' and he became God's knight, and saw the angel of God.

And thus most blissful was the life of these three blessed ones for the mutual society, help, and comfort Cæcilia and Valerian had each of the other and of this beloved brother to them both. The fragrance of Paradise filled their home. Cæcilia sang sacred hymns with such sweetness that the angels came down to listen.

And they went about doing good, full of works of mercy towards the families of Christians bereaved by persecution, seeking out the bodies of their martyred brethren, embalming them and preparing them honourable sepulchres.

And so their good deeds reached the ears of the prefect of the city, Almachius. He would have stopped them, but

they said, 'How can we desert our duty for anything man can do to us?' And they were seized and brought before the tribunal, and given the alternative of sacrificing to the gods or being put to death.

'Every day we offer sacrifices to God,' they said.

'To which of the gods?' asked Almachius.

'Is there more than one God?' said the brothers.

'Then the whole world is wrong and you and your brother alone are right!' said the prefect.

But Valerian said, 'Deceive thyself not, Almachius. The Christians who have embraced this doctrine cannot any longer be numbered. It is you who are as the planks which float in the water after a shipwreck.'

Their patrician dignity did not save them from ignominious punishment. But their sufferings and heroism touched the hearts of the officers of Almachius, especially of his attendant Maximus. Weeping for pity he said, 'O flower of Roman youth, and brothers united by an affection so tender, why will ye despise the gods and thus go to death as to a feast?'

They told him of immortal life, 'of the soul laying aside the vesture of the body at death, as the body lays aside its clothing at night.'

Maximus took them to his house, and there Cæcilia also came at night, and Maximus and many others turned from their false faith to God alone, and were christened; and afterwards, when day waxed light, Cæcilia said to them with steadfast cheer, 'Now, Christ's own knights "leve" and dear, cast away the works of darkness and arm yourselves in the works of brightness. You have fought the good fight, your course is done, and have kept the faith. Go to the crown of life that may not fail. The rightful Judge shall give it you.' And when this was done men led them forth to do sacrifice.

Then were they led along the Appian Way, these new Christians, Maximus and his soldiers, with the dew of baptism fresh on their brows—along the Appian Way, by the tomb of the Cæcilia Metella, who was of the young bride's ancient house.

But when they were brought to the place, no incense nor sacrifice would they offer, but fell on their knees with humble heart and glad devotion, and lost both their heads in that place; and their souls went to the King of grace.

And Maximus saw their souls glide to heaven with the angels, 'full of beauty and light, as if going to a nuptial feast.' And as he told this with piteous tears many were converted; and he was beaten to death.

The Christians she had so long served rescued the bodies of her heroes for Cæcilia, and she herself buried them, with tears of farewell and hope, and with sacred perfumes, and placed above them the stone tablet engraven with the crown and palm.

Maximus also she reverently buried, and on his memorial stone she engraved a phœnix, in tender memory of the words concerning the resurrection and the deathless life by which Valerian had won him to the faith.

Not many days were the three blessed ones separated. Martyrdom soon reunited them in one home.

The prefect sent officers who brought Cæcilia before the tribunal, covetous, it was said, of her wealth.

But her gentle and gracious ways melted the hearts of those sent to take her.

They bewailed her being thus sacrificed in her youth. But she said, 'To die for Christ is not to lose youth but to renew it.' And her wise and eloquent words as, standing on the marble steps of her house, she spoke to them of their Lord and of immortal life with Him, won these also to the faith.

She asked a few days' delay, and during that time many more were turned to Christ, until at last she was brought before the tribunal.

'What manner of woman art thou?' said Almachius.

'I am a gentlewoman born,' she said; 'among men I am called Cæcilia, but my noblest name is Christian.'

'Knowest thou not,' he said, 'that I have the power of life and death?'

'Not of life,' she said; 'but thou canst indeed be a minister of death. The power of man is but as a bladder which a needle can pierce and burst.'

The prefect himself was smitten with a reverence which prevented his ordering her to a public execution.

She was taken to his house to perish by heat and suffocation in the calidarium of the baths. But through the long night and the day also, for all the fire and the heat of the bath, 'she sate all cold, and felt it no woe.'

'But in that bath she was to leave her life.' At last the headsman came and smote her neck three times with his sword.

More than three strokes were not lawful. And so half dead, with her fair neck bent, 'he left her lie, and on his way he went.'

The Christian people gathered round her, and three days she lived in that torment; and never did she cease to teach the faith to those she had fostered and led to believe, and all the time her sweet voice sang the praises of God. And quietly and with thought for everyone she distributed her wealth among those who had need, and for her house she prayed it might be made a temple to the Lord for ever.

And so at last, laid down like a lamb for the sacrifice, her head softly resting and her hands clasped together, she breathed out her soul to God, to the Lord, to whom in her childhood she had given her whole heart.

> Her house the church of Saint Cecile hight;
> Saint Urban hallowed it, as he well might;
> In which unto this day in noble wise
> Men don to Christ and to his saint servise.

And in the church built over her house, beyond the Tiber, lies her statue above the tomb in which her body was removed from the Cemetery of St. Calixtus, where she had been laid beside the two brothers she had won to Christ. The spotless marble represents her lying as, Baronius says, her body was found, not as one dead and buried, but on her right side, as one asleep.

And in the sacristy is an ancient sarcophagus with the inscription, 'This is the house in which St. Cæcilia prayed.'[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 2. In art represented crowned, bearing wreaths of roses or other flowers; a palm, a sword, an almond branch, a sprig of flowers. In later representation with a portable organ or harp, and playing on an organ.

St. Agnes

OF ROME.

January 21.

Martyred A.D. 304. In all the Calendars. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. ; Ecclus. li. 1–8; St. Matt. xiii. 44–52.)

'Genuine Acts of this most celebrated martyr we do not possess,' Ruinart says, 'but the loss may be in some measure repaired from the witness of the Fathers.'

St. Ambrose had an especial veneration for her; Prudentius also has a hymn in honour of her. St. Jerome writes of her to Demetrias, 'In the writings and tongues of all nations the life of Agnes is praised in the churches, the blessed martyr Agnes, who overcame her own youth and the tyrant, and consecrated her chastity by martyrdom.'

Constantine built a Basilica over the place of her martyrdom outside the walls, near the Porta Pia. St. Gregory preached to the people his homilies on St. Matthew, on her festival.[1]

The Basilica on the Via Nomentana is known to all, where every year it is the custom to bless twin lambs, from whose wool is woven the pallium of the Archbishops.

Agnes, like St. Cæcilia, came of a noble Roman house, and is the favourite saint of the Roman women, and was called to her confession at an earlier age than Cæcilia, at thirteen, when scarcely more than a child. She was the child of Christian parents and wealthy. From her earliest childhood her whole heart was given to the Saviour who died for her. But the son of the governor of Rome fell passionately in love with her. He sought her hand in marriage from her parents ; but they respected the feelings of their daughter and received his advances with hesitation. Impatient of delay, he sought an interview with the young maiden to plead his own cause.

[1] Ruinart.

But Agnes would not listen to his suit. Her heart was already bound to 'One,' she said, 'by whose love alone my soul lives. Such is His beauty that the brightness excels all the brightness of the sun and the stars; the heavens are ravished with His glory and say in their language that they are as darkness to His light. He has given me a treasure beyond all the wealth of the Roman Empire. Those who serve Him are loaded with riches. He is so powerful that all the forces of heaven and earth cannot vanquish Him; the sick are healed by His touch, the dead rise at His voice, and I love him more than my soul and life and am willing indeed to die for Him.'

Her words and her disdain incensed her suitor and turned his love to bitter jealousy and rage. His father, Sempronius, the governor, made every possible effort to change the mind of Agnes with regard to his son, until one day one of his people told him she was a Christian, and it was to Him the Christians called their Lord and King her heart was given.

Then the prefect was glad, because if he could not win her heart for his son he could avenge her disdain on the unconquerable maiden without seeming to be acting from private resentment.

He therefore summoned her before his tribunal.

'Be married, Agnes,' he said, 'or, if thou wilt not, then sacrifice to the goddess Vesta, and serve her all thy life among the virgins who keep the sacred fire for Rome.'

And as she refused he threatened her with the direst insults. But she said, 'If I will not be faithless to my Lord for thy son, who nevertheless has my esteem and who is a living creature of God, still less will I abandon His service for lifeless forms that can neither hear nor see. And as to thy threatened wrongs, my Lord Jesus can send His angels, or be Himself around me an impenetrable citadel.'

And her trust was rewarded. He whom she loved and trusted preserved her inviolate in the midst of every attempted outrage.

The fair tresses of her own hair enfolded her like a vest-

ment of cloth of gold, and moreover a heaven-sent robe whiter than snow enfolded her, not white only but luminous, so that the darkness shone like heavenly day around her; and those who approached her with evil intent grew pure and chaste in heart by the sweet purity of her presence, and went away penitent and renewed, with a new vision of what life, womanhood, and holy love could be.

Only the prefect's son, the cause of all her suffering, blinded by his passion, seemed unable to be raised by the vision of her purity, and he fell, smitten by the wrath of Heaven, blinded and convulsed and stiffened in death, at her feet.

Then the prefect, his father, mad with grief and anger, called her sorceress and murderess.

But Agnes made the wretched father understand that his son had perished not by her will, but from the wrath of heaven, so that he entreated with tears her prayers.

And she prayed so fervently to God for the life of her persecutor that it was given back. The son was brought back indeed to a new life in every sense, and went as a herald of the Cross through Rome, declaring that there was no god in heaven or earth, in the heights or the depths, but the God whom the Christians adored.

Then the prefect would have gladly saved the saviour of his son; but it was too late.

The tide of priestly and popular fury he had raised swept him on. 'She is a sorceress! a witch!' cried the people and the priests of the idols, 'and she must die!'

They made a pile of fagots and kindled them, and set her on them as on a funeral pyre. But the flames divided and encircled her like a rainbow, and moreover they blazed forth all around and consumed those who had kindled them.

At last the executioner mounted the pyre; and the young girl knelt down and prayed. 'Blessed be Thy holy name, O Lord. I see what I have longed for. I hold fast what I have loved. My heart and tongue and soul praise Thee. I go to Thee, O Thou eternal God, who reignest with Him only, Jesus Christ, for ever and ever.'

The executioner trembled and turned pale, but Agnes quietly gathered her robe around her, covered her face with her hands, and bent fearless to the mortal blow.

The Christians of Rome laid her to rest in a catacomb which still bears her name, in the Via Nomentana, outside the gates of Rome, fearlessly following her to the grave not with wailings and lamentings, but with joy and triumph. And among them were her father and mother, who had trained her for Christ and whose home she had never left. Day and night her parents prayed beside the sacred grave; and eight days after her martyrdom, when they were in prayer together there, on the winter day, they saw, in a vision, a company of virgins, clothed in cloth of gold, with precious stones, crowned with garlands, pearls, and diamonds; and in the midst of them came forward St. Agnes, triumphant and glorious, with a lamb whiter than snow by her side.

She stopped, and begged her companions also to stop, and turning to her parents, she said to them, 'My beloved parents, weep not for me as for one dead, but rejoice rathe' with me that I have now in heaven the crown of glory in such a holy company, and that I am with Him whom when on earth I loved with all my heart and soul and strength.'

Then she was silent, and passed on with the heavenly choir who bore her company.

This was on January 28.

And ever since the vision of St. Agnes, the pure and saintly maiden, and her snow-white lamb have shone on Christendom amidst the winter and the snow, a type of the love which purifies and the purity which is the purity not of ice, but of fire, the sacred vestal fire of the City of God.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 3. Represented in art with a lamb, or angel; in a fire; angels covering her with a garment; a sword in her hand or in her throat; a dagger; a palm; a short cross; a dove bringing her a bridal ring.

St. Agatha

OF SICILY.

February 5.

(Martyred A.D. 251. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Ecclus. li. 1–8 ; St. Matt. xiii. 45–52.)

The current of the story leads us again to the borders of the old Greek world. Through all the contests of Carthage and Rome, the touch and memory of Greece seem to linger among the old Greek colonies founded, before Rome began to be, on the coasts of Sicily and Southern Italy.

The name of Agatha is in the martyrology of the Carthaginian Church, so early swept away that every mention of any name among her commemorations is a sure title of ancient pedigree.

Her praises are sung among those of other martyrs by Venantius Fortunatus. Palermo and Catania dispute the honour of being her birthplace, but it was at Catania that she lived and suffered.

Her martyrdom, according to the legend, though it took place under Decius, was due not to any general edict, or to the popular fury, but to the special wickedness of the governor Quintianus.

She was of an illustrious family. Quintianus, hearing of her beauty and her holiness, determined to tempt her from Christianity and purity. Unable to make any impression on her, he gave her into the keeping of a wicked woman and her nine yet more wicked daughters.

For nine days the good and gentle maiden was left in the hands of those lost ones, themselves altogether gone over to the side of the tempter and become tempters. But in the end they confessed it would be easier to melt rocks than to tear Christianity from her heart.

'My soul,' she said, 'is founded and built on Christ. Your words are but wind, your persuasions like a stormy rain, your threats like a rushing river. But this wind, this rain,

this river, let loose against the foundations of this house of mine, cannot shake it, for it is founded on a rock.'

Quintianus, enraged at his failure, summoned her before his tribunal and said, 'What is thy condition?'

'I am free-born,' she replied—'indeed, of noble birth.'

'Why, then, if of a noble and illustrious family, dost thou show by thy conduct the baseness of a slave?'

'Being a servant of Christ, I am in this sense of servile condition.'

'If thou wert indeed noble, wouldst thou take the name of slave?'

'The service of Christ is perfect freedom and the highest title of nobility.'

'Are not we, then, who despise the service of Christ and worship the gods, of noble rank?'

'Your nobleness has sunk to a slavery so low that not only are you slaves of sin but subjected to wood and stone.'

He threatened her with torture unless she would sacrifice to the gods.

'Take care,' she said, 'that you do not become like the gods you worship—thyself like thy Jupiter, thy wife like Venus. What worse curse could we wish to anyone than to wish them to follow those execrable lives?'

'To what end this torrent of words?' he replied. And he commanded her torments to begin.

All the suffering only wrung praises of God from her lips, except once, when in the agony of her wounded breast she asked if no mother's breast had nurtured her persecutor.

Thrown back again into the dungeon, at midnight a venerable old man appeared to her, bearing a vase, and before him an angel carrying a wreath. The venerable man offered to heal her. But she hesitated. 'If it is the will of my Saviour Christ to heal me,' she said, 'He will heal me Himself.' And she drew her veil around her and would accept no alleviation of her pain until the old man told her he was the Apostle Peter, and said, 'Fear not, my daughter, for Christ has sent me to minister to thee.'

Not only were her wounds healed, but the prison was filled with a light so brilliant that the gaolers fled in terror and her fellow prisoners counselled her to escape. But she refused and said, 'Tempt not me to lose my crown and be a cause of trouble to my guards. With the aid of my Lord Jesus Christ I will keep my confession to the end.'

Four days afterwards she was summoned again before the judgment seat, and came forth again fresh and strong, and healed of all her wounds.

'Who has healed thee?' Quintianus asked.

'It is the Christ, the Son of God.'

'Dost thou dare still to speak of thy Christ?' he cried.

'My lips shall never cease to confess Him nor my heart to call upon Him.'

Then Quintianus had a great fire kindled, and, bound and helpless, the maiden was flung on it. But a great earthquake shook all the city, and the people rose against the governor, and said this was sent for his cruelty to the maiden Agatha.

And as they took her back to her prison and would have laid her on burning coals, she stretched out her hands to heaven and said, 'O Thou who hast won my heart from earth and made me victorious over tortures, and given me courage and patience, I pray Thee now to receive my soul.'

Then, having made this prayer, she rendered up her spirit.

And it was said that as they buried her in a new tomb, with balms and perfumes, a young man suddenly appeared, clothed in rich raiment, with a troop of more than a hundred beautiful children in magnificent robes.

No one had ever seen him in Catania before. But he entered the tomb where they had laid the virgin's body and placed near her head a marble tablet on which were inscribed these words: 'Holy, devoted soul, the glory of God, the protector of thy city.' And then he disappeared and was never seen again.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 3. Represented with a knife at her breast, and various tortures.

St. Lucy

OF SYRACUSE.

December 13.

(Martyred A.D. 303. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Ecclus. li. 9–12 ; St. Matt. xiii. 44–52.)

Fifty years had passed away since the young maiden Agatha had been laid to rest in the new tomb in fair Catania, at the foot of Etna, whose fiery floods the maidenly veil she had drawn around her in her dungeon (preserved as a precious relic) was believed to have turned aside from her city, when, at Syracuse, another persecution arose under Diocletian, and another Christian maiden, as young and fair, of the same race as Agatha, was found ready to die for the Lord to whom she had consecrated her life.

Lucy—St. Lucia—lost her father early, and lived with her mother, Eutychia. Lucy had been early trained as a Christian, but her mother and her relations had betrothed her in her childhood to a young man of her own city, rich and noble, but a pagan.

Lucy had desired never to marry at all, but this marriage to a pagan was an especial desecration and terror to her, and from day to day she entreated it might be put off.

Meantime her mother had been suffering for years from a disease no physician of the many she consulted was able to cure.

The fame of the wonders wrought at the tomb of St. Agatha at Catania reached Syracuse, and Lucy persuaded her mother to make a journey with her to Catania and implore the intercession of the saint, their young country-woman.

While they were at Catania, in the church there happened to be read from the Gospels the story of the woman with the issue of blood, who, like her mother, 'had suffered many things of many physicians, and grew nothing better, but

rather worse,' and who was healed by touching the hem of the garment of Christ.

This encouraged Lucy to hope for her mother, and she told Eutychia her hope, and the mother and young daughter together, after everyone else had left the church, stayed prostrate in prayer before the tomb of Agatha.

And as they thus knelt for a long time, the young girl fell into a sweet sleep, and in a vision she saw St. Agatha in dazzling lustre of diamonds and pearls, amidst a troop of angels. She said, 'Lucy, my dear sister, virgin consecrated to God, well art thou called Lucia, who art a light to the faithful. Why dost thou ask of me what thou canst obtain at once thyself for thy mother? Know that thy faith has won back health for her, and that as Jesus Christ has rendered Catania famous for my sake, Syracuse also shall be made glorious through thee.'

Lucy awoke at these words, and turning to Eutychia said, 'You are healed, my mother; but, as God has given you health, grant me this grace: never more to speak to me of marriage, but to leave me free to give myself wholly to the Lord.'

Eutychia consented, and then Lucy asked another favour.

'I pray you, also, my mother, to give me what would have been my dowry, that I may use it to help the poor who are the members of Him who possesses all my heart.'

Eutychia, with some natural pride in her good administration of her daughter's inheritance, and with a natural clinging to her worldly goods, which gives additional value to her giving them up, replied, 'You know, my daughter, that during the nine years since your father died I have increased rather than diminished the wealth he left you. I will give you all this, and you shall do with it what you will. Only for what belongs to me I should be glad to keep it while I live, and when you have closed my eyes this also will be yours.'[1]

But Lucy wished her mother to share in her willing

[1] *Les Petits Bollandistes.*

offering, and persuaded her that it was little to do for God to give Him what we are no longer able to keep. And so together, with one mind, when they had returned to Syracuse the happy mother and child began to distribute their wealth among the poor. By degrees they sold their jewels and their costly furniture and their estates, and spent the price in ransoming captives, delivering prisoners, succouring widows and orphans and all who had need.

The young nobleman to whom Lucy had been betrothed hearing of this was much irritated, and complained to Paschasius, prefect of the town, that Lucy, who ought to have been his wife, being misled by the superstitions of the Christians, was thus wasting his substance.

The judge summoned her at once before his tribunal and spared no efforts to make her sacrifice to the gods; but Lucy said, 'The perfect and holy sacrifice that we have to offer is to visit the fatherless and the widows and the afflicted, and to succour them. For three years I have been offering this sacrifice to the living God, and there remains nothing now but for me to offer Him myself.'

Then he threatened her with the edicts of the Emperor.

She replied that if he had to please his sovereign, she feared only to displease Him—the Lord—who had the keys of hell and death.

He would not listen to her further, but said, 'You will not speak thus when you come to suffer.'

But she said it would not then be she that would speak, but the Holy Ghost, who would speak through her.

'You think, then, that the Holy Ghost is in you?' he said.

'I believe,' she replied, 'that those who live pure lives are temples of the Holy Ghost.'

Then he threatened her with insult and outrage.

But she replied, 'The Holy Ghost will not abandon me for that. My body may be in thy power, but no violence to *that* can destroy the purity of my soul. That can neither be sin nor stain to which the soul does not consent.

If thou wouldst cut off my hand, and with it offer sacrifice to idols, God would not impute that to me.'

Paschasius, enraged, commanded his officers to take her away; but the power of God came on her and made her immovable, so that not all the force they could bring, with many oxen bound to her by ropes, could move the young girl from where she stood.

Then they kindled a great fire around her, but the flames had no power over her, any more than over the three Hebrew children in the furnace of old.

She, in the midst of the flames, consoled the Christians around, and predicted the end of the persecution; and so, succouring and comforting all around her to the last, her life was ended at length by the stroke of a poniard.

And in a few years—less than twenty—Constantine became Emperor; St. Lucy's dying words were fulfilled, and the Christians were persecuted no more.

Whether the mother who had first trained her martyred child for Christ, and then so meekly followed her on the higher way of service and sacrifice, survived her, and lived to see, according to her daughter's prediction, the Christian religion triumph throughout the Empire, the legend does not say. Beside the few whose names are visible to us are always multitudes of the hidden ones, whose canonisation is at another tribunal.[1]

[1] The incident from a later legend that her eyes were taken out and then miraculously restored, which is represented in many of the pictures of St. Lucy by her eyes being carried on a dish, is considered by *Les Petits Bollandistes* to be a kind of allegorical play on the name Lucia, or to refer to the story of another St. Lucy (the Chaste) with whose beautiful eyes a young man fell so madly in love that to save his soul she plucked them out.

Dedications of churches: 2. Represented with a sword through her neck; oxen unable to drag her along, &c.

St. Prisca

OF ROME.

January 18.

(Martyred A.D. 270. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Ecclus. li. 9–12 ; St. Matt. xiii. 44–52.)

Among the virgin martyrs in our Calendar are two who may be called children.

The sacred aureole rests on every age as well as kindred, on the white hair of Polycarp, and also on the innocent heads of the young girls Prisca and Faith.

The name of Prisca, and only her name, is in the 'Acta Sincera Martyrum.' Her legend is very confused as to chronology ; it seems to have become entangled with the story of Prisca or Priscilla, the wife of Aquila.

The Church of St. Prisca is on the Aventine Hill, in Rome, and stands, according to an old tradition, on the site of the house of Aquila and Priscilla.

Her story may be given thus :—

She was a maiden of an illustrious Roman house. Her parents were Christians. She was apprehended and brought as a Christian before the Emperor Claudius. He thought it would be easy to persuade the gentle and beautiful child to change her faith. She was, therefore, led into the Temple of Apollo and commanded to offer incense ; but she said she would never bend her knees to any but the One God who made heaven and earth, and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then she was subjected to blows and tortures such as it seemed impossible her childish frame could bear, so that all who saw it wondered and were touched with pity. But none of these things moved her. She seemed clothed in heavenly light.

Finding the child unconquerable, the Emperor sent her back to prison, and thence they brought her forth to the

amphitheatre to be devoured by a lion. But the lion forgot his savageness and would not touch the child, but fawned at her feet, gentle as a lamb.

After other torments, and after shutting her up a long time in one of the temples of the gods, all in vain, she was led to the Ostian Gate and beheaded on January 19.

It was said that an eagle watched over the body of the child until the Christians were able to come and bury it; the king of beasts and the imperial bird both paying homage to the martyr child, whom Jesus the Lord had indeed taken up in His arms and blessed.

Great honour was paid to her memory in ancient days in England.[1]

[1] Ruinart in the *Acta Sincera* does not even give St. Prisca's name. It was honoured in Europe in the fifth century, but the legend was rejected as not trustworthy by Pope Gelasius in 494.

Represented with a lion near her; with an eagle guarding her in death.

St. Faith (Fides, Foi)

Of Aquitaine.

October 6.

(Martyred late in 3rd Century. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Ecclus. li. 9–12 ; St. Matt. xiii. 44–52.)

The other child martyr in our Calendar links us with the ancient martyrologies of France.

Her name (only her name) is found in the 'Acta Sincera' of Ruinart, with that of St. Caprasius.

In the 'Petits Bollandistes' she stands among a glorious company of fellow martyrs, the martyrs of Agen (in Aquitaine), St. Caprasius, St. Faith, St. Alberta (sister of St. Faith), St. Felician, and a great number of others massacred by the crowd.

They suffered in the persecution of Diocletian, under the same ferocious persecutor who put St. Vincent to death at Valencia—Dacian, the governor of Spain.

From Spain, whence, according to the local legends, had first come to Agen missionaries of the Cross, Dacian swept across into Aquitaine. Arriving at Agen, he threatened death to all Christians who would not worship the gods, and spread before their eyes the instruments of torture he had used in Spain. Horror seized the Christians, and they fled to the neighbouring hill of St. Vincent, where they found a refuge in the cave near the top, surrounded with wild rocks. The Bishop Caprasius went with them, to protect and minister to his flock.

And so it happened that the glory of leading the forlorn hope of Agen fell on the little maiden Faith, still but a child ; 'for God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.' Of noble blood and gentle courtesy of manners, the beauty of the soul exceeded the beauty of her form. From her cradle she loved the Saviour, her God, and would have no other master.

Left in Agen whilst the other Christians had taken refuge amongst the rocks, she was summoned before Dacian. As she went to the tribunal signing herself with the Cross, as it had been signed at baptism, on brow, lips, and breast, she prayed, 'Jesus Christ, my Lord, Thou never forsakest those who call upon Thee. Help Thy servant and send my lips words worthy of the questions I have to answer before the tyrant.'

'What is your name?' said Dacian.

'My name is Faith,' she replied.

'And your religion?'

'I am a Christian from my infancy. I serve the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart and soul.'

'Sacrifice to our gods,' the governor said, 'or you shall die under the torture.'

She heard these threats without fear. Looking to heaven she said in a clear strong voice, 'In the name of Jesus Christ my Lord not only will I not sacrifice to your gods, but I am ready to suffer all kinds of torments.'

She was stretched, like Vincent, on the fiery bed of torture.

But all the people were touched with pity to see a young and noble maiden thus tortured and suffering with such courage. 'What cruelty, what injustice,' they cried, 'to torment thus a young maiden of an illustrious house, who has done nothing amiss, whose lips have not been polluted with an evil word, whose only crime is adoring her God!'

And that day a multitude whose names we know not confessed the faith of Jesus Christ and won the palm of martyrdom.

But on the mountain with his fugitive flock among the rocks, the Bishop Caprasius, ever bearing in his heart those of his people still left in the city, saw in a vision how the young maiden Faith was suffering. And as he prayed for her and looked again towards heaven he saw the young maiden crowned with a crown of precious stones, brilliant and of many colours, and from the clouds he beheld a dove descend and rest on her head, and from the wings of the dove fell a soft dew which quenched the flames.

Then the bishop felt his place was beside the sufferers, and returning to the city, his mother met him and encouraged him to suffer for his Lord. And he also made a good confession.

And many hearts were turned from heathenism to Christ by the cruelty of the persecution and the patience of the martyrs, and numbers came to the Temple of Diana and refused to do sacrifice, and therefore were beheaded, and multitudes more were massacred in an assault of the heathen crowds, instigated by Dacian.

Thus a great multitude was added to the noble army of martyrs from the city of Agen. But at the head of that heroic company was the young maiden Faith, revered for ages in England as well as in her own Aquitaine, in London as well as in Agen. And to this day to a little island of silence and peace in the midst of the roar of the tide of the great city we give the name of 'St. Faith's, under St. Paul's,' in memory of the young girl who gave her life for her Lord at Agen, in Aquitaine, fifteen hundred years ago.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 16. Represented in art; three sisters, as children, holding swords.

St. Margaret[1]

OF ANTIOCH.

July 20.

(Martyred A.D. 306. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Ecclus. li. 9–12; St. Matt. xiii. 44–52.)

Once more from the West back to the East—from Rome and Spain and England and France to Alexandria and Antioch, not only for the saints but for the legends.

With St. Margaret and St. Catharine we step out of the region of historical research altogether, into the world of religious romance and sacred ideals. What history there is in the matter is concerned not with the life but the legend.

Two of the four great virgin patronesses, St. Catharine, St. Barbara, St. Margaret, and St. Ursula, are in our Calendar ; St. Catharine and St. Margaret belonging both to the East and West.

They stand, these two types of ideal womanhood, Margaret, daisy of Paradise and pearl of the heavenly city, with her dragon, feminine counterpart of St. George, conquering, according to one form of the legend, by being sacrificed, and in the strength of purity destroying the destroyer ; Catharine, queenly in rank and in intelligence, satisfied with nothing but the loftiest love and the highest wisdom, keen to search into the secrets of the universe and the laws of the stars, and finding the secret of secrets to be the Divine love, at the heart of all the secrets and at the root of all the laws.

The 'cult' of St. Margaret was brought back by the crusaders with that of St. Catharine from Syria to Europe, in the eleventh century.

And from that time the two beautiful ideals and allegories

[1] The legend is given from *Les Petits Bollandistes* and in Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art.*

rose higher and brighter before Latin Christendom, and especially England. The name of Margaret becomes one of our most familiar names, partly also through the honour paid to Margaret, Queen of Scotland. There are 238 churches dedicated in honour of St. Margaret amongst us.

The legend has many forms; it changes like a summer cloud. By the Greeks she is called Marina. She was the daughter of a priest of the old gods, of high rank and reputation, called Ædesius, and was born at that Antioch, in Pisidia, where St. Paul confirmed the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to 'continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God.' The echo of the Apostolic words had not died away. Margaret's mother died early, and the child was committed to the care of a poor woman six miles from the town, and grew up with her foster mother amongst the fields and flocks.

This foster mother was a Christian, and from her infancy Margaret learned to love the Saviour, and gave herself to Him as her only Master and Lord. When her father heard that she had become a Christian he was very angry and drove her from him; and she went back to the foster mother and lived content and humble with her as a child and servant, thinking nothing of her noble birth, and in all things gentle and obedient; and the two loved each other as mother and daughter. And Margaret used to keep her foster mother's few sheep, like the peasant girl who a thousand years afterwards was inspired, as she believed, through Margaret's voice to rescue France. So the peaceful days passed on until Olybrius, the pagan governor, happening to pass that way, saw the young maiden watching the little flock, and, smitten by her gentle grace and beauty, fell in love with her.

'If she is a slave by birth,' he said to his attendants, 'she must be purchased for me. If she is free-born I will make her my wife.'

The attendants made haste to seize Margaret and bring her to the prefect's house; but as they took her thither, fearing the torture and her own weakness, she prayed to the Lord to keep her, body and soul.

And the officers who had captured her said to the prefect, 'This young maiden is an enemy of the gods of the Empire. She adores Jesus, who was crucified by the Jews, and no promises nor threats of ours can move her.'

When she appeared before Olybrius he said, 'Fear nothing, young maiden; tell me whether thou art slave or free-born.'

She answered, 'My family is well known in the city and I am of no obscure house. But, since thou speakest of freedom, know that I depend on no man. I am a servant of Jesus Christ. From my earliest years I have learned to revere and honour Him, and Him I will adore for ever.'

'What is thy name?' said the prefect.

'Men call me Margaret,' she said, 'but in holy baptism I received a more illustrious name. I call myself a Christian.'

Then, furious with anger and passion, the prefect had a great tribunal erected and summoned all the city to witness the trial of the young girl, hoping the terror of such publicity would subdue her. The day of trial came, and the multitude being assembled he began by offering her the choice between life and death, joy and torments.

She replied, 'Life and joy, thanks to God, I have indeed found. They are in the strong citadel of my heart.'

The words she spoke in confession of her faith were so eloquent and forcible that the prefect said they could not be her own; she was entangled in a net of sophism and magic enchantment.

She said the words and wisdom were not indeed her own, but that if he or any would believe the Christ they would at once see and understand as she did.

Then, proceeding from persuasion to punishment, by the prefect's orders she was subjected to torture after torture, till she herself could not bear to behold what she was strengthened patiently to endure, and covered her eyes with her robe.

She was finally thrown into a dungeon, where the great adversary himself assailed her with his wiles and his terrors.

The wiles which her simplicity of heart penetrated she despised. And when at last he rushed on her in the form of a terrible dragon, breathing out sulphurous flame, she vanquished him by holding up before him the cross of her Lord. Or, according to the more popular story, she was actually devoured by the monster, who then burst asunder and vanished, leaving the young maid unhurt and the prison full of a great glory of light, in the midst of which appeared the Cross, and resting on it a heavenly dove, whiter than snow, with a heavenly voice encouraging her to persevere.

The next day the tortures were renewed, but neither fire nor water nor any of the elements created could injure this servant of the Creator or subdue her soul. Through all the torments she spoke to the people of the Saviour she loved, so that multitudes came to Christ and to the crown of martyrdom through her.

And to silence the eloquent preaching of her lips and of her patience, at last, she was borne outside the city, and when she had knelt and said her last prayer she was beheaded.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 238. Represented crowned; piercing a dragon with a long cross or spear; with dragon and lamb; with dragon chained; bursting through body of dragon; trampling on dragon, grasping its head.

St. Catharine

OF EGYPT.

November 25.

(Martyred A.D. 307. Sarum Ep. and Gosp. : Ecclus. li. 1–8; St. Matt. xiii. 44–52.)

The legend of St. Catharine does not date further than the eighth century even in the East, and it does not rise above the horizon of Western Christendom until after the Crusades in the eleventh century.[1]

It is curious as an evidence of the common life which throbbed through medieval Christendom and of the flowing back of the East on the West through the Crusades, to find, by the beginning of the fourteenth century, Venice taking her as patroness of her colleges ; fifty churches dedicated in her name in England; and in France the heroic peasant girl of Domremy, dreaming in her childhood among the forests of Catharine and Margaret as the foremost saints in Paradise, and believing she received that inspiration of 'great pity' by which she rescued France, through their voices.

When Joan of Arc was asked, during that six months' trial at Rouen, 'Did she know she was to be wounded at Orleans?'

'I did know it,' she said, 'but I told the king nevertheless not to desist from action.' And 'St. Catharine heartened her,' she said, 'so that she rode on in spite of her wound.'

They asked her how she knew St. Michael and the angels from St. Margaret and St. Catharine.

'By their voices,' she said, 'and because they told me.'

They asked her details as to their forms.

[1] Ruinart (and Alban Butler, quoting Joseph Assemani) come to the conclusion that all the particulars we have on which we can depend are a passage in Eusebius about a Christian lady of Alexandria, illustrious for her high birth, great wealth, and likewise for her singular learning, who having resisted all the temptations and menaces of the tyrant Maximin, was by him despoiled of all her estates and goods and sent into banishment.

She would only say she saw the glorious faces, always the same ; and a great light, and that the voice was 'beautiful, gentle and humble, and spoke French.'

And, as no other saints except the mother of the Lord, the names of Catharine and Margaret have stamped themselves on our common speech—Margaret giving her name to the daisy with its golden heart and 'crimson-tipped' rays, the little children's flowers, commonest of all ; and Catharine to this day flashing in the Catharine wheels.

The legend of St. Catharine may be given thus :—

St. Catharine was the daughter of Costis and Sabinella, King and Queen of Egypt. From her earliest childhood she was the wonder of all for her beauty of mind and face. She studied Plato, and would have answered the questions of the Queen of Sheba better than Solomon.

Her father built her a high tower with many fair chambers full of books and mathematical instruments. And from the top she would study the stars in that clear sky of Egypt, and all the creation to her was full of wonder and delight.

Her father and mother were excellent and most loving to her, but they died early and left her a queen at fourteen, and wiser than all around her, but an orphan and alone. She was more beautiful than any princess in the world, but she did not care for any pomp, or dress, or all her precious things. God's golden stars seemed to her more magnificent than all the treasures of earth, and she shut herself up in her palace and studied philosophy, Plato, and the stars, till she grew wiser than all the wise men of the East.

Then the people of the country grew disturbed, and came to her and entreated her to marry, that she might have one by her side to share the cares of government and lead them forth to war.

When she heard this she was much troubled.

'What manner of man is this that I must marry?' she said.

'Madam,' the spokesman of the people said, 'you are our most sovereign lady and queen, and you have four

notable gifts: the first, that you are come of the most noble blood in the whole world; the second, that you are a great inheritor; the third, that in wisdom you surpass all others; the fourth, that in bodily shape and beauty there is none like you. Wherefore we beseech you that these good gifts with which the great God has endowed you may induce you to take a lord to your husband, to the intent you may have an heir to the comfort and joy of your people.'

Then the young queen Catharine, with a grave countenance, said that if God had indeed so endowed her she must the more love Him; and if they would have her wed, her husband also must possess four noted gifts. 'He must be of blood so noble that all men should worship him; so great that he shall never think I have made him king; so rich that he shall pass all others; so full of beauty that angels of God shall desire to behold him; and so benign that he will gladly forgive all offences done to him. Him, if you find him, will I take for my lord and husband of my heart.'

Then the councillors and people despaired, for they said, 'Such a one as she has desired there never was nor ever will be.'

But she said, 'If I do not find him he shall find me, for other will I none.'

Now, near the queen's palace there lived a poor old hermit in a cave, and that very night the Holy Virgin Mother of our Lord appeared to him and told him that the King who should be Lord of the queen's heart was none other than her Son. Then the hermit went to the palace and presented the queen with a picture of the Virgin and her Child; and when St. Catharine saw it her heart was so filled with its holy beauty that she forgot her books, her spheres, and the stars. Plato and Socrates became tedious to her as a twice-told tale, and she kept the sacred picture always before her.

That very night she had a dream. She met on the top of a high mountain a glorious company of angels, clothed

in white, with chaplets of white lilies. She fell on her face before them, but they said, 'Stand up, dear sister Catharine, and be right welcome.' Then they led her by the hand to another company of angels, more glorious still, clothed in purple, with chaplets of red roses. Before these she fell on her face, dazzled with their glory; but they said, 'Stand up, dear sister Catharine; thee hath the King delighted to honour.' Then they led her by the hand to an inner chamber of the palace of heaven, where sate a Queen in state. The angels said to her, 'Our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Empress of Heaven and Mother of the King of Blessedness, be pleased that we present unto you this our sister, whose name is in the Book of Life, beseeching you to accept her as your daughter and handmaid.' Then our Blessed Lady rose and smiled graciously, and led St. Catharine to her beloved Son. But He turned from her and said sadly, 'She is not fair enough for Me.' Then St. Catharine awoke, and in her heart all day echoed the words, 'She is not fair enough for Me.' And she rested not until she became a Christian.

And when Catharine was baptised the Blessed Virgin appeared to her again in a dream with the Divine Child, and presented her to the Lord of Glory and said, 'Lord, she hath been baptised, and I myself have been her godmother.' Then the Lord smiled on her and held out His hand and plighted His troth to her. When she awoke she saw the ring on her finger, and thenceforth despised the world and all its pomps for Him.

Soon after this Maximin, the cruel tyrant, came to Alexandria from Italy full of rage against the Christians, and made an edict that there should be such a sacrifice to the gods as had never been known before. And from all the country they brought oxen and sheep to sacrifice, and the city was full of their lowing and bleating and of the preparation for the sacrifice and feast.

Then Catharine, the queen, knowing that after the blood of rams and oxen would flow rivers of the blood of the Christian brethren, did not wait to be summoned, but with

her royal heart, taking the people under her protection, went herself to the great temple of the god Serapis, where Maximin was celebrating his wicked rites, and confronted him and demanded to be allowed to plead for the Christians and to show the glory of the Christian faith.

And her beauty of countenance and majesty of bearing being as great as her rank the Emperor was subdued, and permitted that a great assembly of the people should be called, and that also the priests and philosophers should appear to defend the gods and Catharine should speak for Christ her Lord.

And the assembly was convened, and fifty of the ablest sophists were called on to defend their gods ; and they began with scorn, saying that the least of the scholars was able to answer this royal maid. Catharine, full of humility, had prepared herself by prayer and fasting, knowing that she had no strength but of God.

And such was the wisdom and majesty of truth and tender pleading with which she spoke, quoting their own wisest, such as Plato and Socrates, to prove there was one God, and only one, Creator of the glorious stars she knew so well, and of heaven and earth and all men, showing by Greek philosophers and Hebrew prophets, astronomers and sybils, that Christianity not only brought to them something glorious and new, but restored to them the old treasures of their forefathers which they had lost,—that the fifty opponents laid down their weapons of argument and confessed that she was right and that Christ the Lord was God. And with them a great multitude of the people believed.

But the rage of the cruel Maximin knew no bounds. He ordered the new converts to be massacred. And they went to the Christ they had confessed consecrated by the baptism of blood ; and the glorious princess herself was both racked and tortured, and then laid with her bruised and wounded limbs in a dungeon, with no one to wait on her, to die of hunger. But her eloquence and her patience had touched the heart of the Empress Faustina, Maximin's wife, and in a dream she saw Catharine come to her and

offer her a crown from Christ the Lord. Therefore the Empress Faustina and Porphyry, the Emperor's chief captain, came to her in the dungeon. And then the captive princess spoke to them of the Christ who had died for all, and for whom she suffered, so that the Empress and Porphyry believed. Catharine had no earthly promises to give them, none but the promise of following the Lord to death. She said they should go to their Lord by the path of martyrdom in three days if they were faithful to the end. Wounded, she healed their wounded souls ; captive, she set them free ; in the darkness of the dungeon she brought them light. In three days the tyrant had the Empress and Porphyry put to death. And then once more he began the combat of torments with Catharine. Four wheels were made with spikes, between which she was to be torn in pieces ; and to these she was bound. But fire came from heaven and broke the wheels in pieces, so that the fragments flew far and wide and injured many. But Catharine stood in the midst untouched.

And at last she was led outside the city of Alexandria and beheaded by the sword.

But the angels came and bore her body tenderly in their arms across the Red Sea and across the sandy desert, which the children of Israel had trodden of old, and laid her to rest on the top of the holy mount that must not be touched—Mount Sinai.

And thus after many hundred years she was found, her raiment indeed waxen old with the ages, but her body folded as in silken robes by the rich tresses of her fair hair, an aureole around her brow, and a heavenly fragrance breathing from the tomb. And meanwhile the blessed spirit had long dwelt with Him who had made her 'fair enough for Himself.'

And so these two, Margaret and Catharine, shone on the West from the Eastern lands where they lived and suffered, the two great Virgin Patronesses ; two highest types of womanhood : Margaret meek and patient and strong to suffer ; Catharine queenly and wise, with her keen

and cultivated intellect and her royal, fearless eloquence; going forth to encounter danger for her people as a mother bird for her brood, and from the depths of her dungeon bringing light and liberty even to those who had bound her there.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 51. Represented with a wheel; with a sword, book, a lamb, a palm; carried by angels to Mount Sinai.

CHAPTER VII.

MARTYRS IN THE WARFARE WITH THE BARBARISM OF THE NORTH.

St. Lambert

OF MAESTRICHT.

September 17.

(Martyred A.D. 709. Calendars: all except Roman. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: Heb. v. 1–6; St. Matt. ix. 35–38, and x. 7, 8, 16.)

WE come with St. Lambert into an altogether new world, or rather into what looks like a new chaos without form and void before the creation of a new world—from a world penetrated with the art and literature of Greece, ruled by the laws of the Empire and city of Rome, to the chaos out of which Christendom was struggling into existence in the days of the Merovingian kings. Rome was gone for ever, with its temples, its emperors, its armies, swept away by the northern invasion. And the invasion of the Franks in Gaul seems to have been in a sense more disintegrating than any other, being rather a wild irruption of bands of warriors under their captains than the emigration of tribes under their chiefs. All the wonderful centralised web of roads was broken off from the centre, and had become meaningless, reduced to mere interrupted tracks between town and town or village and village, and when out of repair no one could any longer be found who knew how to restore them. And not only were these material means of communication shattered; the great Latin language was replaced by countless dialects, not one of which had yet grown into a recognised or written language.

Only the Church remained intact out of all that shattered ancient world ; the germ of the new life which had done so much to shatter it. The clergy still sang psalms and chanted liturgies, wrote homilies, letters, and hymns in Latin. The bishops were princes or magistrates in their episcopal cities; through them the cities were linked with the Central See of Rome. The clergy also stood between the invaders and the invaded, the chiefs and the people ; and when the Frankish chiefs forbade any freeman to become a priest, lest he should thus become exempt from military service, the clergy laid all the deeper and wider the foundations of freedom by consecrating the serfs, who were not free men, to the priesthood, thus liberating and educating at once, and turning the edict of prohibition into an act of emancipation.

The sole survivor and heir of the old civilisation, bearing in her heart the regenerating force of the new nations, never, perhaps, did the Church hold the whole future of the world more in her keeping than in that turbulent period represented in France by the Merovingian kings.

And the high standard of purity and righteousness held up by the Church in these darkest times is well reflected in the life of St. Lambert.

St. Landebert, or Lambert, was born about 640, during the reign of Childeric II. His parents were of high degree, and possessed of large property in the county of Liège. His father, a great seigneur, his mother, of an illustrious family, both sought to train their son in the Christian faith and life. St. Remaclus, Bishop of Maestricht, was his godfather. From his childhood he showed a fervent piety and a generous care for all around him. His legend records two characteristic miracles, full of symbolism. When serving at the altar as a young acolyte he is said to have carried burning coals without injury in the folds of his surplice to rekindle the incense. And one day, when some workmen who were building a church wanted water to drink, by his prayers a spring gushed forth close at hand, satisfying their thirst.

When his godfather, St. Remaclus, died, St. Lambert's

parents put him under the charge of St. Theodard, who had succeeded to the bishopric ; and in the city of his birth, under the guidance of the good bishop, he grew up, delighting in the sacraments and services of the Church and in solitary prayer, despising the things of the world and full of zeal for the good of his neighbours.

When he was twenty-one years of age his bishop, Theodard, was murdered in a neighbouring forest by some men of power and influence, men who had unjustly seized estates belonging to the Church, of whom he had demanded restitution. And then his fellow citizens, who had known Lambert's blameless and benevolent life from his infancy, claimed him ; and he was forced rather than elected to the bishopric.

It was useless for him to plead his youth as a reason against the choice. The burden was fastened on him, and his house, bare of all luxuries for himself, became a hall of justice and a house of mercy for all the needy and afflicted of the city. Always gracious and courteous, the serenity and kindliness of his face, his frank bearing and conversation attracted all. Daily he ministered at the altar and delighted to preach in his church. Justice and a thoughtful consideration marked his rule in the city and on his estates; from the pulpit and in private he never failed boldly to rebuke vice, and at the same time tenderly to encourage and restore the penitent. His holy presence and his just and gentle government helped to keep alive, in those distracted times, the ideal of justice and mercy, which might enable men to understand the existence of God.

To him it was personally no distress on his own account to have this burden of place and rule torn from him, as it was, when his patron, Chilperic II. (who, though weak and cruel himself, had upheld Lambert), was deposed and he was driven from his bishopric.

But to the people it was as the loss of a father. What would become, they said, of the feeble and the poor, the orphans and widows, now that he was torn from them? And in his stead was placed over them a man of hard

nature and lawless life—a ravening wolf instead of the good shepherd.

For seven years this usurping bishop, Pharamond, misruled and misused the Church of Maestricht.

But to Lambert those were years of sacred calm, and of precious discipline and growth in humility and grace. He spent them in the monastery of Stavelot, on the borders of his diocese, refusing to be treated with any distinction, taking the place of the humblest of the brethren ; and if, unconsciously to himself, still a leader of others, a leader simply by his close following of the Leader of all—most earnest in prayer, most patient in hardships, most ready in service.

One anecdote expresses what his life among the brethren was. One cold winter night when he rose to his private devotions he let fall his sabot, or wooden sandal, which made a noise. The abbot heard it, and to punish this breach of the silence of night he ordered the delinquent, not knowing who it was, to go and pray before the cross outside the church. Lambert obeyed without a word, and went barefoot and without his outer garment. There he prayed three or four hours on his knees. When the monks came in to warm themselves at the fire after Matins the abbot asked if all were present. 'All,' was the reply, 'except the one who was sent to pray before the cross.'

At once he was called in, and great was the surprise of the community when Bishop Lambert entered, covered with snow and stiff with cold.

The abbot and the monks threw themselves at his feet, asking his forgiveness.

No one was to blame, he said. Was it not good for him to learn to serve God, like St. Paul, in cold and nakedness?

The reflex lesson was not lost, let us hope, on the giver of the order.

Seven years passed, of silence and obedience, of peace and prayer, the preparation for the years of combat, of faithful guiding and difficult rule to come. At the end of

the seven years Pharamond was driven, for his crimes, not only from the city but the province, and Ebroin, Mayor of the Palace, a cruel persecutor of Lambert, died a violent death.

Pepin d'Héristal, a man who, whatever his own shortcomings, could recognise and honour good men, sent an embassy to the monastery to entreat Lambert to return to his diocese. And wonderful was the joy with which the city of his birth and his pastoral rule welcomed him back; the same as of old save for the seven years' pruning and ripening; more humble, more gracious, more faithful than ever in rebuke, more wise and tender than ever to restore.

Numbers of holy men and women gathered around him to serve God and His Church, in the city, or to found monasteries in the regions around. Many saints were inspired and trained through him. He went about doing good through the least known and remotest villages of his diocese. He became the first missionary apostle to the Island of Zealand, an outlying district where the people were still given to idolatry, and at much personal toil and peril he won the greater part of them to the faith, so that he was called their 'apostle.'

But it was not among the heathen but among those who professed the Christian name that he found his martyr's crown.

Pepin d'Héristal, by a license terribly common among kings and Mayors of the Palace in those Merovingian times, had repudiated his wife, Plectrude, and taken instead to his house a beautiful woman called Alpaïs, who became the mother of Charles Martel, and thus grandmother of Pepin le Bref and great-grandmother of Charlemagne. Neither Pepin nor Alpaïs intended by this sin to cut themselves off from the communion of the Church.

Pepin continued to honour Lambert, and Alpaïs made every effort to win his favour. Not one of the clergy or bishops, aware as they were of the crime, dared to open their lips to rebuke the great captain and to say, 'It is not lawful for thee to put away thy wife and marry another.

Lambert alone, never able to compromise where the glory of God and the salvation of souls were concerned, boldly and faithfully showed the prince the horror of his sin, called it by its true name, and warned him of the scandal he was causing and of the judgment to come.

Pepin listened, and was so moved that Alpaïs began to dread that he would give her up, and after using in vain every method she could think of to bend the conscience of the Bishop she resolved on his destruction.

Pepin continued to defer to the counsels of Lambert in all things except this one passion, and invited him to his court to consult him about some affairs of state.

Alpaïs entreated him, if he could not change his mind, at all events to spare her the humiliation of public rebuke.

Lambert could only say he dared not flinch from his duty as a bishop.

Pepin gave a great banquet, and entreated the Bishop to be present, and when the wine cup was presented to him he offered it first to Lambert to bless it and then to replace it in his hands.

The Bishop thought himself bound to do what Pepin asked. The courtiers followed the prince's example. But when Alpaïs presented the cup to him he refused to sanction her presence by taking it, and complaining to Pepin of his attempt to entrap him into compliance he rose from the table and left the room and resolved to retire from the court.

Pepin followed, to entreat him to relent; but Lambert said frankly and faithfully he was grieved at heart that the prince should thus cause a scandal to all France and draw on him the anger of God.

And from that time, it is said, Alpaïs did not rest until she had him put to death, dreading lest at last Pepin would be persuaded to take back his wife. She seems to have turned the anger of certain lawless chiefs who were already irritated against some relations of St. Lambert, in one of the many quarrels of those fierce days, against the Bishop himself. They found him sleeping in a little village, since grown into the city of Liège. They surrounded the house

on all sides. The Bishop could have summoned defenders; and two nephews who were with him and his domestics were eager to defend him, but he would not suffer a blow to be struck on his account. 'If you love me truly,' he said, 'love Jesus and confess your sins to Him. As for me, it is time that I go to live with Him.' When the assassins broke into the house he threw himself prostrate on the ground in an attitude of penitence, his arms outspread in the form of a cross. And after massacring his nephews and some of his servants the assassins killed the Bishop with the sword.

And so St. Lambert died a true martyr for Christ, for daring to rebuke vice in high places and for defending the purity of Christian homes.[1]

[1] There is another version of the story of Alpaïs.

Dedications of churches: 2. Represented in art with spear or dart in his hand or at his feet; sometimes a palm branch; stabbed with javelins; beaten with a club.

St. Boniface (Winfried of Crediton).

June 5.

(Born A.D. 680; martyred June 5, A.D. 755. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: 1 Cor. iv. 9–14; St. Matt. x. 23–26, during Eastertide St. John xv. 5–7.)

The first English missionary bishop martyred among the heathen, but not the last. From the cold snows of Friesland to the heart of Africa and the islands of the Southern Seas, from the eighth century to the nineteenth, our English Church has sent her sons to join the 'noble army' with which she daily praises God. And she is sending them still.

Winfried, afterwards named Boniface, was born at Crediton, among the pleasant hills of Devonshire, near Exeter. One wishes he had not changed his beautiful Old English name with its sweet breathing of peace for any other.

At five years old the little child's heart seems to have been awakened by a heavenly touch never forgotten. Good monks from the monasteries near were in the habit, according to the custom of the Celtic or Irish communities, of going on missions through the neighbouring countries, sometimes preaching on the village green and resting under lowly cottage roofs, at other times accepting the hospitality of the great men of the place, and then hallowing the houses of their hosts with their prayers and teachings. And the child Winfried listening (as a thousand years afterwards the boy John Coleridge Patteson listened to Bishop Selwyn), with wondering eyes, to the words of the strangers, probably himself unnoticed, drank them in until the Spirit speaking through them became in him a well of living water, springing up and flowing forth as a fountain of life for the great German land. Thenceforth it seemed to the child that the home where those good men lived must be as the very gate of heaven; and there he desired to live. At first his

ST. BONIFACE STUDYING IN A MONASTERY.

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father opposed, but the boy's purpose continued steadfast until at last, when he was about thirteen, he was brought to the verge of death by a serious illness ; and then the father accepted his son's desire as a Divine vocation, and gave him to God with an acquiescence as generous and unreserved as in after days the father of John Coleridge Patteson.

He passed many years in the abbey at Exeter, and then he removed to the abbey of Nutcell, in the diocese of Winchester, one of the great schools of the time. There he studied diligently, and learned all that was to be learned—poetry, rhetoric, history. There also, above all, he steeped his heart and mind in the Holy Scriptures, and was in time appointed a teacher of literature and history, having always much delight in being among the young. At thirty he was ordained priest, and from that time was chiefly occupied in preaching to the people around, and in the cure of souls. His ability and judgment were early recognised, and he was sent on a deputation to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He was also much consulted in the councils of his Church and was honoured and courted by all.

But deep in his heart all the time was burning a fire of missionary zeal, fed doubtless by the stories told from monastery to monastery of the work of Willibrord in Friesland, and of other missionaries. Especially he longed to carry the Gospel to those ancient German lands from which his own forefathers had come.

And in A.D. 716 his friend Abbot Wimbert gave his sanction to his going forth as a missionary to the heathen of Friesland. He needed not to learn a new language to make himself understood. For a hundred years, from the coasts of Great Britain the tide of Christian life had been flowing back in missionary enterprise to the Continent of Europe ; and through what is now the North of France, Switzerland, Belgium, Bavaria, and Hesse, on the mountains, and among the primeval forests, and on the sites of abandoned Roman cities, were founded monasteries peopled by men from Great Britain, followers of Columban, St. Gall, and other adventurous spiritual pioneers.

It is interesting to remember that as regards England the first missionary impulse seems to have been given by a young priest named Egbert, by one who, like so many others, had found instruction and inspiration among the monastic communities in Ireland, and had devoted himself to evangelising the Continent, but just as he was starting on his voyage he was arrested by illness, was left behind by his companions, and was never able to follow.

Friesland was then in a state of wild turmoil on account of the war between King Radbrod and Charles Martel.

(It is of Radbrod that the story is told that once, when considering the possibility of becoming a Christian, he asked a missionary as a preliminary enquiry what had become of the kings his ancestors who had not believed, the missionary replied that they were in torments in the other world; whereupon Radbrod said, 'I see no good in my going to heaven with a few poor people. I shall keep to the religion of my fathers.' And he became a violent persecutor.)

After remaining the summer in Friesland, where Willibrord of Yorkshire, trained in the northern monasteries, had long been labouring, Boniface returned to England, the steadfastness of his purpose tested, as so often, by disappointment. Two years he remained at his monastery, where, on the death of his old friend Abbot Wimbert, he was elected abbot. But the passion for clearing new ground, which has always been such a large element in English life, was not to be quenched in the heart of Boniface; he longed to penetrate new lands, found new churches, monasteries, schools; to bring the good news for the first time to new tribes of men, yet allied to his own in speech and blood. He was moved, as he said, 'by the love of travel and the fear of Christ;' the loving fear of selfishly hoarding a treasure which was meant to enrich the world, and the *Wandertrieb* of our race.

Boniface had reached the sober age of thirty-eight when he set out on his missionary career again, this time never to return. His thirty-seven remaining years were to be devoted to the glorious work given him to do.

No doubt his first unsuccessful missionary expedition, with the interval of rest in the English monastery afterwards, had been no lost or wasted time for him. He had learned, at all events, one of the first lessons in all work, to see its especial difficulties.

Before proceeding again on a pilgrimage to the field of foreign missions he went to Rome, with a letter from his bishop, Daniel of Winchester, to Pope Gregory II. A very different journey for Boniface from what it had been when four centuries before Alban of Verulam went to Rome (according to the legend) to complete his education there ;—the Roman roads broken into disconnected fragments, the military stations and post-houses gone, the way beset with perils from wild tribes of invaders, none of which recognised each other or themselves as the germs (which nevertheless they were) of future nations ; a world without form and void, of chaotic ruins and chaotic beginnings ; the only organisation left standing throughout it the Church, like a highly developed vertebrate organism amidst a floating mass of molluscous or crustaceous creatures, which wore whatever bony substance they had mainly outside, in the form of bristling armour wherewith to destroy each other.

He went with a band of English pilgrims, and on the way through Gaul and Italy they made their devotions at the shrines of the martyrs, who had mostly belonged to the old vanished Roman world.

And when he reached the city what a different Rome !

In Alban's Rome Christians might still be thrown to the wild beasts in the Coliseum ; on the Capitol and all around stood the temples of the gods, basilicas, theatres. For Boniface all that ancient world had vanished—emperor, 'Senate and people,' gods and goddesses ; basilicas transformed into churches, pillars of temples into pillars of Christian shrines, statues which could not be transformed broken up, or only saved by being lost.

Yet still, still more than ever, to Boniface Rome was the Imperial and Metropolitan city : imperial because

Christian ; metropolis because the citadel of the City of God.

Every church, on the Capitol of the dethroned Jove or in the catacombs of the martyrs, was a trophy of victory over a whole ancient world of vanquished foes, and might become a triumphal arch into a new world of conquest over the new heathenism of the North, which Boniface had vowed his life to overcome.

From the Vatican, where the martyrs now venerated throughout Christendom had illumined Rome in their agony as living torches from Nero's gardens ; from the Capitol, where the Ara Cœli, the altar of Heaven, had replaced the altar of Jove ; from the Aventine, whence the great Gregory had sent Augustine to convert Boniface's own heathen forefathers, the English Winfried might well gather inspiration to go forth and fell any sacred oak of Thor the Thunderer or to encounter any perils among the heathen of the North.

At Rome moreover he touched the historical past of Christianity.

The language which for him was the language of the Church and the sacred books was still, at Rome, as for St. Agnes or St. Cæcilia, St. Augustine or St. Gregory, the speech of everyday life. The Devonshire Winfried did not need to learn a new language for Thuringia and the Rhineland. But in Rome he distrusted his scholastic Latin which he had learned as a foreign tongue, and feared to express his creed except in writing.

From Rome also the monk from remote Devonshire could gain a new, wide outlook over the Eastern and Western world.

Severed as the Church was, even then, the great destructive tide of Mahomedanism, which had laid waste the Churches of Asia Minor and Africa, of Polycarp and Augustine, and was rolling up through Bulgaria on the east and through conquered Spain on the south into the heart of Europe, could be felt from the Seven Hills surging against the whole of Christendom.

Unity, external unity, might well seem to him, looking from that central height over the devastated East and the stormy heathen North, not a mere dream of some far-off paradise, but a necessity of bare existence.

Three times in his missionary life of thirty-eight years Boniface came to Rome; first in 719 with a letter from his friend Bishop Daniel of Winchester to introduce him to Pope Gregory II. and to receive his sanction and counsel; secondly, in 722, summoned by the same Pope to report results of his three years' labour and receive consecration as bishop (*regionarius*) of the new mission; thirdly, seventeen years afterwards, in 739, at his own desire, to see the new Pope, Gregory III., to tell of his 100,000 German converts, and to receive fresh powers as Archbishop of Mainz.

Gregory, with the true tact and instinct of the ruler, perceived at once his capability for his vocation, and sent him away with the encouragement of his sympathy and the sanction of his authority, armed also with letters to Charles Martel, then the great ruler of the christianised Franks, entreating him to aid the English missionary in converting the Saxon tribes Charles was endeavouring to subdue, and also empowering Boniface to restore to the faith the half-lapsed Christians, remnants of the Christianity of the old Roman frontier, and to organise or gather together the scattered communities founded during the past century by the Irish missionaries.

For from the beginning to the end the work of Boniface was twofold: winning new converts from the outside barbarian world; and gathering into unity of communion and discipline the lapsed or disorganised Christians already there.

He went first to Thuringia, and there, through the great Thuringian forest, then all forest (afterwards Martin Luther's land), our Devonshire Winfried went up and down, preaching and baptising, often in hunger and poverty and peril of life, but never weary of gathering into the fold the lost and wandering sheep altogether outside, or of gathering together the scattered sheep from solitary hermitages or small

communities who were in danger from their isolation of being again absorbed into the heathen world around.

From Thuringia he made an expedition to Friesland, the first scene of his missionary labours, never forgotten by his heart, and so strangely interwoven with his missionary life from its beginning to its martyr close.

It was opened again now to Christian work by the death of the heathen king Radbrod, and Boniface laboured there for two or three years, assisting his countryman Archbishop Willibrord. Willibrord much wanted to keep him as his coadjutor and successor; but Boniface was too essentially a pioneer and founder to be able to stop in regions already half won. He returned to Thuringia, and on his way back, as he passed through the land of the Rhine and the Moselle, one story is told of him which illustrates the winning charm by which he drew fellow labourers around him and kept them faithful to the end.

On the banks of the Moselle, near ancient Roman Treves (where St. Athanasius had sojourned, and where St. Augustine's soldier friends had found the life of St. Anthony which changed their lives and gave the final enkindling touch to his conversion), Boniface was received hospitably by the venerable abbess Addula. At table, according to the custom of the times, a boy of fifteen, fresh from school, the abbess's grandson Gregory, read a passage from the Latin Bible.

'You read well, my son,' said Boniface, 'if you understand what you read.'

The boy, not catching his meaning, said he perfectly understood.

'Well then,' said Boniface, 'tell me how you understand it?'

The boy began to read the passage again.

Then Boniface said, 'No, my son, that is not what I mean. I want you to translate what you have read into your native language.'

The boy at once acknowledged that he could not do this. So when he had read it again distinctly Boniface translated

it into German and preached on it to the whole company. And the words sank so deep into the boy's heart that nothing would satisfy him but to go himself with Boniface, to learn from him to understand the Holy Scriptures.

'If thou wilt not give me a horse,' he said to his grandmother, the abbess, 'I will go with him on foot.'

The abbess saw that a Divine Power had touched the lad's heart, and she gave him a horse and a servant, and suffered him to go away with Boniface, whom he followed thenceforth whithersoever he went, among the heathen in the forests, to Rome, and finally to his martyr death.

And after his master's death Gregory continued to follow his footsteps till he also was an old man of seventy, teaching the young, and making his monastery a training school of missionaries.

In Thuringia Boniface baptised many thousands of idolaters, destroyed their temples, and built churches.

The form of renunciation which he demanded of these German converts indicates the discrimination and thoroughness of his work. He was not content merely with the usual form, 'I renounce the Devil and all his works.' He asked, 'Dost thou renounce Woden, Seator, and Friga?'

No vague promises of general goodness would satisfy him. The especial temptations of each were to be especially renounced.

From Thuringia he wrote to Pope Gregory speaking of his success and asking his counsel about some practical difficulties.

In reply the Pope congratulated him and desired him to repair again to Rome. That second visit was doubtless of great importance in Boniface's life.

This time he looked out from the Seven Hills on no new work, no unexplored land. He had surveyed his ground, tried his weapons, found out his difficulties, and trained many of his fellow labourers.

From Rome Winfried went forth the second time, as Boniface (the new name given him then), bishop (*regio-*

narius) of the new lands, with authority to claim the obedience of all Christians already existing there, or to be converted.

From the ancient trophies of past victories he went forth ; from the dethroned Jove of the Capitol, to cut down the Sacred Oak of the Teutonic Thor in Hesse.

Soon after his second return to Germany he found many of his apparent converts hopelessly mixing up the new faith and its sacred rites with the old. He determined, therefore, that the moment had come for a visible manifestation that the two could not be combined. There was an enormous oak in the forests of Hesse, near the village of Giesmar, sacred to Thor. Boniface went forth with his clergy to fell it publicly to the ground. It was regarded on both sides as a trial of strength. The heathen must already, in spite of their menacing attitude, have been in some measure shaken to allow of such an attempt being made at all. Boniface bravely took the axe in his own hands. The heathen multitude awaited the result in silence.

After a few strokes a mighty wind seemed suddenly to sway its lofty branches, and the grand old tree crashed down, splitting with its weight into four huge pieces.

Then the heathen confessed their gods to have been vanquished, and at once acknowledged themselves subjects of this new Lord whom they saw to be so strong, and whom Boniface declared to be so merciful and ready to forgive.

A little forest oratory was built at once of the wood of the fallen shrine. It was the first church of the country.

But great as the victory was, it was only the beginning of the conquest.

It is remarkable that this event is almost the only approach to miracle in St. Boniface's life. He never claimed to work miracles. The claim to miracle-working was made by Adalbert, one of the unattached monks whose opposition was one of his chief difficulties.

One characteristic of Boniface's work seems to have been its resemblance to the methods of working in our own times. Around the story of the earlier Irish missionaries

plays far more of the glow and twilight mystery of legend. They were principally hermits and recluses, like the Fathers of the Desert. They went into the wilderness not so much to seek for the heathen, as to find solitude and freedom for a disciplined life. They became centres of civilisation simply by being civilised. They spread the light of Christianity by simply gathering it into a focus and shining. They felled the trees in the forest depths and made them into dwellings and chapels; they tilled fields, sowed and reaped, made nets, and fished in the lakes and rivers, while the wild tribes around them looked on and learned. They said to themselves or to each other in raptures of contemplation and devotion (seeing Jesus as He walked among them), 'Behold the Lamb of God;' and the heathen people around drew near and listened, and found the Christ.

They settled (like St. Gall) among the ruins of some ruined Roman city, again lapsed into wild forest, taking the stones of the deserted temples to build their churches and breaking in pieces the gilded images which the wild tribes around had dreaded or worshipped as relics of vanished supernatural beings. On Sundays and holy days St. Columban would carry a heavy volume of Sacred Scriptures on his shoulder into the forest depths to hold converse with God, and the people, watching, came to perceive that these mysterious parchments had voices and that there is an unseen God and Friend who can speak to us and be spoken to.

The writings of St. Columban and others of these monks are full of deep spiritual piety.[1] 'God dwells in us as the soul in the body,' he wrote. Who can indeed be happier than the man whose death is life, whose life is Christ, whose reward is the Saviour, to whom the heavens bow down, whose Father is God, whose servants are angels?' Again, 'It behoves pilgrims to hasten to their home. We are pilgrims; therefore let us hasten to our fatherland. For our whole life is a day's journey.'

[1] Neander, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, and Montalembert, *Moines de l'Occident.*

And again, 'Love is no labour; it is, on the contrary, a sweet and wholesome and healing thing to the heart. Unless the soul is diseased within, its life is love. He tramples on the world who renounces himself. What should we render to the Creator of the world who died for us sinners, for us His creatures? Surely we should die to sin. No one can die to himself if Christ does not live in him. If thou hast overcome thyself thou hast overcome all.'

And so, carrying on this inward combat, leading this inward life, they were doubtless also combating and conquering for the world around them. An intense fire of self-renouncing and enrapt devotion shines out from these early missionaries, these new Fathers of the Desert, in Burgundy and Switzerland, and along the frontiers of old Rome, lapsed again into wilderness, and also a tender glow as from the paradise and childhood of the world. The 'spirit of the mountain,' speaking from his lonely height to the 'spirit of the waters,' acknowledges the mystic power of these strangers. Savage beasts, wolves and bears, fawn on them; birds of prey bring them food; timid hunted creatures trust them and take refuge with them. Their story comes to us like soft music across the wide waters of the past.

But with Boniface we seem to speak in the language of to-day, and, in some ways, the contrast may seem like coming from poetry to prose, from some lovely quaint old ballad to the less fascinating literature of a missionary report. We have, however, but to recover the poetic gold by digging deeper for it; and if we do we shall certainly find it not in grains but in nuggets.

Boniface worked no physical miracles, unless we except the fall of the Sacred Oak of Thor. Once indeed, it is said, a huge bird opportunely dropped a fish above his table when he had not much on it; but the attention does not seem to have been repeated. The sources of his supplies were not ravens or angels, but contributions from friends in his old English home, of books, and clothes, and food, and money. The miracles wrought for him were in hearts moved to help him. His one great miracle was the con-

version of Germany. Before all and through all he was a missionary. He went into the wilderness not for its solitude, but because the wandering sheep were there.

From this great purpose he never seems to have swerved for a moment.

If he seeks from the Abbess Eadburga 'a beautiful manuscript of the Epistles of St. Peter, written in golden letters,' it is to 'move the admiration of his Germans.' For himself another kind of gold was more beautiful. As he said at the Council of Tivoli, 'Formerly the priests were of gold and they used chalices of wood. Now the chalices are of gold and the priests of wood.'

And in his conflicts, whether mistaken or not, with some of the earlier monks, Irish and others, it was, as with Cyprian, the safety, the very existence of the scattered flock which he sought in his contests for unity and his efforts at gathering them together.

For his fellow labourers, and for his sustenance, Bishop Boniface looked chiefly to his old English home; and thence they were liberally sent. 'As he worked unremittingly, the fruits of his mission so increased from day to day, that he obtained many new fellow-labourers from England. And also from the convents of Great Britain came a swarm of widows, virgins, mothers, sisters, cousins of the missionaries, eager to share their labours and their perils. Chriemhild and Berathgilt, her daughter, stayed in Thuringia; Chiudrad was sent to Bavaria, and Thekla remained at Kitzingen on the Main; Lioba, beautiful as the angels, of a ravishing eloquence, learned in the Scriptures and the sacred Canons, governed the Abbey of Bischofsheim. These ferocious Germans, who had formerly delighted in blood and battles, came to kneel at the feet of these gentle teachers ('ces douces maîtresses'). Their own silence and humility have hidden their labours from the eyes of the world; but their place is at the origin of German civilisation. Providence has placed women beside all cradles.' [1]

St. Lioba was herself a poetess. She studied the Old

[1] Ozanam, *Etudes Germaniques*, quoted by *Les Petits Bollandistes*.

and New Testaments deeply, also the Fathers; ruled her convent firmly and tenderly; was dearly beloved by her pupils, and exercised a free hospitality to court and peasants, serving her guests with her own hands. She was a cousin of Winfried of Crediton, and came from near his own old home. Many of the letters of St. Boniface are to women; but with Lioba it seems as if the double tie of natural and spiritual kindred, the double association of early memories and high common aims, had made the tie very close. Brief as the glimpses given us are, she seems to stand as a helpmate beside him, as St. Scholastica beside her brother St. Benedict, and St. Clara by St. Francis d'Assisi.

His power of attaching disciples to himself was great, the true spiritual power of winning hearts, not to a helpless clinging, but to a brave following; so that when he died, he left not a wailing group of forlorn orphans, but a valiant, capable company of teachers and missionaries, ready to be martyrs in their turn.

So the years passed on, occupied in penetrating further and further among the heathen tribes, in founding monasteries to be centres of Christianity and civilisation, in organising the new converts to be instructed within the Christian Church.

Boniface (like Bishop Patteson) never returned to his native England. But his heart never left it. Many of his letters are to English women, abbesses of various monasteries.

To one, the royal abbess Eadburga, when she had sent him some manuscripts of the Scriptures, he writes thanking her that she had 'consoled the exile by Divine light, for he who had to visit the dark recesses of heathenism would fall into the jaws of death, if he had not the Word of the Lord as a lamp to his feet.'

To another: 'Pray for me that He who dwells on high, yet hath regard to the lowly, may forgive me my sins, that His Word may arm me with joyful liberty of speech, that the Gospel of the glory of Christ may have full access among the heathen.'

To some nuns : 'Pray diligently that we may be delivered from unrighteous and cruel men, that the Gospel of Christ may be glorified. I would not die unfruitful. I would not go home without leaving some sons and daughters behind me.'

To the English clergy : 'Seek to obtain by your prayers that our one God and Lord Jesus Christ, who wills that all men shall be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, may convert the hearts of these heathen Saxons to the faith. Have confidence in them, for the people are wont to say "We are of one flesh and one blood with you."'

To an English abbot : 'I need your prayers, because the sea of Germany is so perilous to navigate, that I may not, while I seek to enlighten others, be myself covered with the darkness of my own sins. Pray the beloved Champion of us all, the only Refuge of the distressed, the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world, that our gracious Father may place burning torches in our hands that we may enlighten the heathen to see the Gospel of the glory of Christ.'

And on the other hand, to Ethelbald, King of Mercia, he writes a letter in which, while rendering honour to what was good in him, his strict prohibition of theft and perjury, his preserving peace and befriending the widow and the poor, he boldly reminds him how all was marred by the unchastity of his own life.

'The heathen Saxons,' he says, 'might be an example to the Christian king in this. Though a ruler of many he is making himself a slave of sin.' He entreats him to 'have compassion on the perishing multitude his evil example is misleading to their destruction,' and nobly warns him how 'if the sanctity of marriage is dishonoured the result is a degenerate race, ever sinking lower and lower.'

The character of his preaching seems to have been discriminating and practical ; no mere rhetoric or commonplaces, but plain words pressed home. He seems to have followed the advice of his friend Daniel, Bishop of Winchester, to 'learn accurately what the religion of the heathen was,

acknowledging all that was good in it, or in them' (for instance, their great virtue of chastity); 'seeking, not to irritate them by violent denunciation, but by gentle and patient questioning to let them find out for themselves the unreasonableness of their belief in comparison with the Christian faith.'

Fifteen of his sermons are preserved to us. In one he says,[1] 'See, my beloved, what a message we bring you; not a message from one from whose service you may purchase exemption' (as in the German system of atoning for wrong by fines), 'but a message from Him to whom you are indebted for His Blood shed for you.'

And then he passes on to the sacredness of marriage.

Again, in meeting the objection so often made, that if Christianity were so necessary, surely God would not have left the world so long without it, he passes on from the theoretical difficulty to the practical remedy. 'Know that he who, however late, refuses to be healed has no right to complain of the dilatoriness of the physician. Wherefore dost thou murmur at the Sun of Righteousness having risen so late, when even after His rising thou still walkest in darkness?'

In another sermon to the newly-baptised, after speaking to them as to children, of 'the great city of Rome and the mighty chief called Augustus, who once reigned in it, who made peace in all the world,' he goes on: 'Listen, my brethren, attentively, to what you have abjured at Baptism. You have renounced the Devil, his works, and his pomps. But what are the works of the Devil? Pride, idolatry, luxury, homicide, slander, lying, perjury, hatred, fornication, adultery—in a word, whatever corrupts man. Theft, false witness, gluttony, foul language, quarrelling, using incantations, believing in witches and were-wolves, wearying and turning back from God; these works and those like them are the Devil's works, and the Apostle says those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But as we hope by God's mercy that you have renounced all those things in deed as well as

[1] Neander, *Denkwürdigkeiten*.

in intent, it remains for me to remind you, my dearly loved ones, of what you have promised to Almighty God. Now, in the first place, you have promised to believe in Almighty God, in Jesus Christ the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, One God, but Three in One. And the commandments you have to observe are these : You must love God with all your heart and with all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself. Be patient, merciful, kind and chaste. Teach your children and servants to fear God. Reunite those who are at enmity ; let judges not take presents, which blind the eyes to justice. Keep the Lord's Day, and go to church to pray, not to gossip. Give alms as you are able. If you have feasts, invite the poor, exercise hospitality, visit the sick, succour widows and orphans, give tithes to churches. Do to others as you would like them to do to you. Fear none but God, but fear Him always. Believe in the Coming of Christ, in the Resurrection of the flesh, and in the General Judgment.'

The practical method and character of his teaching is illustrated by the especial renunciations (of Woden and Freya) which are added to the baptismal formulas.

As to the other portion of his work, the bringing into the order and unity of the Church of those who had chosen what seemed to them better ways of serving God, the history is very complicated. The story of defeated heresies and schisms must have the onesidedness of all history written only by the conquerors. And Pope Zacharias himself seems to have thought that some of the condemnations of Boniface needed reconsidering.

Of the two opponents who most perplexed him, Adalbert the Frank is accused of having pretended to a direct revelation from an angel, of having accepted almost Divine honours from his disciples, of having taught wild and mystical things, and in general used his gifts to gain honour for himself, rather than to contribute to the common service.

Against Clement, Boniface's other opponent, a teacher of Irish extraction, no accusations of mysticism or self-exaltation

are brought. The controversy in his case seems to have turned on questions of discipline, connected with the marriage of the clergy. Also, Clement was said to have declared that our Lord in His descent into Hell redeemed not only the Jewish patriarchs, but heathens and others who had no means of learning of Him in their lifetime.

Whatever may have been Boniface's wisdom as to these minor controversies, in which the Pope and his devoted missionary Apostle of Germany seem to have differed, any complete unravelling of the tangled threads is scarcely to be hoped for in these later days. Boniface's acts, as those of Cyprian, doubtless proceeded from the instinct of the shepherd guiding his scattered flock through a wilderness infested by wild beasts—the instinct of unity ; the one essential, it might well seem to him, being to keep the flock together.

And, therefore, even to imprison those who would have divided the Christian forces, as he did imprison Adalbert, would doubtless seem to Boniface mercy to him who would have misled as well as to those who were misled. His 'new Christians' were always first in his heart, his unfledged new converts. For their sakes he even wrote a stormy remonstrance to Pope Zacharias on his encouraging superstition at Rome, by sanctioning amulets, as things that through their old heathen faith still had power over his Germans.

So the fifteen years of ceaseless, fruitful work passed away, until, in 738, Boniface once more made a journey to Rome, to see the face of the new Pope Zacharias. He was welcomed, as a victorious general would have been welcomed in the old days, who had saved the republic.

The tidings of his 100,000 Germans won to the Christian Church had preceded him. To create one, who was indeed already the Apostle of the Germans, Archbishop of Maintz and endue him with the Pallium, was merely a recognition of power already wielded, of triumphs already won.

And at this very time (A.D. 738) when Boniface was receiv-

ing at Rome the reward of his lifelong warfare in the commission to further service, his patron and helper Charles Martel was achieving at Chalons that great victory over the Saracens which stemmed the destructive torrent that had ruined the Christian East, utterly laid waste the Church of Perpetua and Cyprian, and swept over Spain.

From the heathen masses in the North and the Moslem hosts of the South and East, Christendom was saved by the different yet co-operative work of the two heroes.

Boniface went back to Germany to carry on the combat for fourteen years more. He founded six new bishoprics, presided at the Councils of Soissons and of Germany, crowned King Pepin le Bref, son of Charles Martel, first of the Carlovingian kings, at Soissons, and in all things did the work of a great metropolitan bishop.

But always in his heart glowed the old missionary fire, always the Apostolic passion for 'the regions beyond;' until at seventy-five he obtained permission of the Pope to lay aside his archiepiscopal dignity and go forth once more, in the Benedictine habit, to the country of his first missionary labours, the northern part of East Friesland.

He named an English monk of Malmesbury his successor as archbishop, and wrote a touching letter to the Frankish court chaplain, Fulrad, committing to his care those he left behind. 'I beseech his Majesty, the King Pepin,' he writes, 'in the name of Christ the Son of God, that he would deign to show me in my lifetime what reward he will hereafter bestow on my scholars, for they are almost entirely strangers' (chiefly, no doubt, his own compatriots). 'Some are priests, appointed in various places to the service of the Church in the congregation; some monks who are supported in our cells to teach children to read; some old men who have laboured with me long and sustained many.

'I am anxious on account of all these, lest after my death they should be scattered as sheep that have no shepherd, and lest the people who dwell on the borders of the heathen should lose their Christianity again. The clergy on the frontiers of the heathen lead a wretched life. Bread to eat

they can obtain, but clothes they cannot, if they do not get advice and support from other quarters, as they have from me, that they might be able to remain in such places, in the service of the people.'

King Pepin granted his request.

And then once more girding around him his Benedictine habit, he went forth with a little missionary company of eight, one a bishop, three deacons and some monks. Among them was Gregory, who had followed him since boyhood from his grandmother's monastery on the Moselle.

He took with him one book-chest, containing the Holy Gospels, St. Ambrose's *De Bono Mortis* (On the Gain of Death), a book he loved much, and also an altar-cloth and a shroud ; the martyr's death being always a possibility for which he was prepared.

When he arrived in Friesland all at first seemed to go well ; he baptised many new converts, and reclaimed some who had relapsed into heathenism since the death of his old friend Archbishop Willibrord. On Whit Sunday he pitched his tent in an open field near Dockum, on the river Burda, and erected an altar. There he awaited the arrival of the newly baptised, on whom he was to lay his hands in confirmation. He was waiting quietly in his tent at prayer, when, instead of the Christian converts he expected, a swarm of fierce heathens, armed and shouting for battle, appeared on the plain. They rushed to the tent of Boniface. His friends and attendants would have fought in his defence. But he would not suffer any resistance to be made. 'We are to render good for evil,' he said, 'and as for me, this is the day I have long waited for. The hour of my deliverance is come.'

Then he went forth from his tent, surrounded by his clergy, encouraging them not to fear the brief passage before them into the celestial kingdom and the 'City of the Angels.'

In an instant the fierce band of the heathen overwhelmed and slew him, and many others with him.

The Devonshire man, who seventy years ago had listened as a boy of five to the Gospel story from the monks in his

father's house near Crediton, now lay, at last, in his grey hairs, slain by those he had spent his life in serving. They knew not what they did. When he was dead they rushed into the tent for the booty they had expected of gold and silver vessels and precious vestments; but they found only a few books, a little wine for the Sacrament, and a few sacred relics; and, enraged at their disappointment, they turned against each other.

It is said that Boniface died with a book of the Gospels in his hand, that it was pierced with a sword and stained with his blood, but that not a letter of the sacred text was injured.

His body was wrapped in the shroud he had laid among his books, and taken first to Maestricht, where Bishop Lambert had died for purity and righteousness a century before; and then it was borne, finally, to his beloved Abbey of Fulda, the English Apostle of Germany resting among his Saxons. And there was laid, in time, his cousin, the English Abbess St. Lioba, after she had faithfully carried on his work for twenty years, dying at a great age, the friend of high and low, of the suffering, the aged and the little children. Side by side the noble Devonshire man and woman were laid to rest in the Saxon land they had helped to win for Christ.[1]

[1] V. Sir James Stephen, *Ecclesiastical Biography*, 481. 'His copy of Ambrose's *De Bono Mortis*, covered with his blood, was exhibited during many succeeding centuries at Fulda as a relic. It was contemplated there by many who regarded as superstitious and heretical some of the tenets of Boniface. But no Christian, whatever might be his own peculiar creed, ever looked on this blood-stained memorial of him without the profoundest emotion. For, since the Apostolic age, no greater benefactor of our race has come among us than this Monk of Nutcell, unless it be the Monk of Wittenberg, who, at the distance of seven centuries, appeared to reform and reconstruct the Churches founded by the holy Benedictine. To Boniface, the heart of Germany and Holland still looks back as their spiritual progenitor, nor did any uninspired man ever add to the permanent dominion of the Gospel provinces of such extent and such value.'

Three of the books which were in his chest when he was martyred are, Alban Butler says, still kept at his Abbey of Fulda: a copy of the Gospels written with his own hand, a Harmony of the Gospels, and a copy of a discourse of St. Ambrose on the Holy Ghost, as well as a treatise on the 'Advantage of Death.'

Dedications of Churches: 2. Represented in art with book pierced with sword, a club, a scourge.

St. Edmund the Martyr.

November 20.

(Born A.D. 840; martyred A.D. 870. Calendars: Sarum, Scotch, Hereford. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: Eccles. xxxi. 8–11; St. Luke xiv. 26–33.)

Four English martyrs are in our Calendar, from four successive centuries, who fell on English ground, besides the great missionary bishop who died by the hands of the heathen in Friesland. Of these four, three marked three successive campaigns by which Christianity was won and kept for England.

Nowhere in Europe was the fight for Christianity harder and more repeated than in England. Three times was the battle fought and won, with the persecuting forces of Imperial Rome and with the Saxon.

The protomartyr Alban marks the union of England with the Continent, and the period of Roman rule. Of Roman name, educated at Rome, he was slain, a victim to the ancient paganism, with its temples to Jupiter and to Diana, in the last desperate conflict of the decaying empire with the rising Church.

Over that early Roman civilisation the tide of northern barbarism swept, and utterly destroyed it. Pagan temples and Christian churches, Roman cities and villas, with the surrounding world of British peasants and slaves, vanished so entirely that when, 400 years after, Bede gives the story of Alban, though he preserves the tradition of a Christian man who, no doubt, really lived and died at Verulam, it is a tradition garlanded with flowers of legend from a world as foreign and far off as the stories of the virgin martyrs of Rome or Sicily.

From the next deadly battle between Saxon heathenism and Roman-British Christianity no martyr's name has sur-

vived in our calendars. Yet that conflict also had its spiritual heroes.

Two thousand monks were gathered at Bangor in one of those vast religious settlements which were characteristic of Celtic Christianity, and after a three days' fast a crowd of these ascetics followed the British army to the field near Chester. Æthelfrith, the Saxon chief, watched the wild gestures of these monks as they stood apart from the host with arms outstretched in prayer, and bade his men slay them in the coming fight. 'Bear they arms or no,' said the king, 'they war against us when they cry against us to their God.' And in the surprise and rout which followed, these monks were the first to fall.

Something of the martyr glory surely must be given to those whose prayers the enemy felt to be a warfare so real. This the final defeat of the early British Christians was in 593, nearly 300 years after the martyrdom of St. Alban. Four years afterwards Augustine of Canterbury won the Saxon kingdom of Kent to the Christian Faith. But it was as a foreign conquest. The links with the earlier Christianity were broken.

The next English martyr marks another wave of heathenism which swept from the barbarian North over England.

The Danish pirates in Scandinavia, uniting with those who had settled in Ireland, had conquered Northumbria, and, being beaten back in Mercia, threw themselves all the more fiercely on East Anglia.

There was reigning at the time the young king Edmund, not yet twenty-nine. Young as he was, he had been king, 'under-king, landlord, and duke' of East Anglia, Suffolk, and Norfolk for fourteen years. When King Offa went to end his days in piety and penitence at Rome, his boy successor was crowned, in 855, by Bishop Humbert, on Christmas Day, at Sudbury, a royal country house on the Stour.

Generous and just, peaceable and devout, he seems from the first to have entered on that especial conflict with the especial perils of his own position, which has been said to be the note of saintliness. 'He hated flatterers, and

would see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears, so much did he dread one-sidedness in his judgments, inaccuracy or falsehood of reports, and the manœuvres and subtleties of human passions.'

His love of his people was rooted deep in the love of God, and his piety was fed by learning, marking, and inwardly digesting the Holy Scriptures. It is said that he lived as far as he could in solitude for one whole year in a tower which he had built for a country retreat at Hunstanton, in Norfolk, that he might learn the Psalter by heart, so as to be able to repeat it at night, when travelling, or in the intervals of his regal work.

The kingly ideal of the seventy-second Psalm seems to have moulded his life. He judged his people with righteousness and the poor with judgment. He judged the poor of the people and saved the children of the needy. He delivered the needy when he cried, the poor also, and him that had no helper. He redeemed their soul from deceit and violence, and precious was their blood in his sight. The widow and the fatherless found in him their protector. Thus it was in his peaceful days; and when the dark days of warfare came he sought with all the strength he had to 'break in pieces the oppressor.'

'And,' so says Carlyle, 'there is clear evidence that his people honoured, loved, and admired him to quite an astonishing degree, and indeed at last to an immeasurable and inexpressible degree; for finding no limits or utterable words for their sense of his worth, they took to beatifying and adoring him. "Infinite admiration," we are taught, means worship. His life has become a poetic, nay, a religious mythus, though undeniably enough it was once a stern fact, as our poor lives are, and even a very rugged and unmanageable one, and clearly he had contradictory speeches and contradictory facts not a few to reconcile with himself. No man becomes a saint in his sleep. Edmund, for instance, instead of reconciling these same contradictory facts and speeches to himself, which means subduing and in a manlike and godlike manner conquering them to himself,

might have merely thrown new contention into them, new unwisdom into them, and so have been conquered by them, much the commoner case. In that way he had proved no saint or god-like man, but a mere sinner, and unfortunately blamable, and more or less diabolic-looking man.

'How then, may it be asked, did this Edmund rise into favour? Really, except it were by doing justly and loving mercy to an unprecedented extent, we do not know. The man, it would seem, "had walked," as they say, "humbly with God," humbly and valiantly with God, struggling to make the earth heavenly as he could, instead of walking sumptuously and pridefully with Mammon, leaving the earth to grow hellish as it liked.

'On this people of Norfolk and Suffolk, living in industry and peace under their beloved young king, burst the Danish heathen hordes, under two of the fiercest of their chiefs, Hincmar and Hubba, sons of Ragnar Lodbrog. They seemed to have had an especial hatred of Christianity. They had destroyed and plundered towns and monasteries in Northumbria and Mercia. In the Fens they razed to the ground the great abbeys of Crowland, Bardney, Peterborough, Ely, and Huntingdon. They massacred the clergy and the nuns with fierce mockeries. At Peterborough Cathedral is shown the stone once placed over a pit in which fourscore murdered monks were buried.

'From the Fens these pirates rushed down on Suffolk and burned the town of Thetford. There King Edmund gathered all his forces, encountered them in battle, and defeated them. But after their defeat large reinforcements so increased the Danish hosts that Edmund, wishing to avoid useless slaughter, disbanded the few troops he had and retired towards his castle of Framlingham.

'The Danes seem to have held him personally in some consideration, for they endeavoured to make a separate truce with him, separating him from his compatriots; but the terms they offered not being such as could save his people or defend their Christianity, the King rejected them without hesitation.

'Then a band of Danes took him prisoner at Bosor, on the Waveney, and brought him loaded with fetters to the tent of the chief, Hincmar.

'Here again safety was offered him and certain terms of peace; but they involved the betrayal of his people and his faith, and the young King would not listen to them for a moment.

'"Cannot we kill you?" cried they.

'"Cannot I die?" answered he.

'And so he was martyred—beaten and cruelly tortured, and then bound to a tree, shot to death as a mark for countless arrows, 'the St. Sebastian of England.' 'Seen and felt by all men to have done a man's part in this life pilgrimage of his; and benedictions and outflowing love and admiration from the universal heart were his meed. "Well done! well done!" cried the hearts of all men. They raised his slain and martyred body, washed its wounds with fast-flowing and universal tears; tears of endless pity, yet of a sacred joy and triumph—the beautifullest kind of tears; indeed, perhaps the beautifullest kind of thing; like a sky all flashing diamonds and prismatic radiance, all weeping yet shone on by the everlasting sun. And this is not a sky, it is a Soul, a living Face. Nothing like this *Temple of the Highest*, bright with some real effulgence of the Highest, is seen in this world.'

'Now might all Anglia laud and follow a hero martyr and great true son of Heaven.

'In this manner did the men of the eastern counties take up the slain body of their Edmund where it lay, cast forth in the village of Hoxne; seek out the severed head and reverently reunite the same. They embalmed him with myrrh and sweet spices, with love and pity and all high and awful thoughts; consecrating him with many stories of melodious adoring admiration and sun-dried streams of tears; joyfully yet with awe, as all deep joy has something of the awful in it, commemorating his noble deeds and god-like walk and conversation while on earth; till at length the Pope and cardinals at Rome, summing up the general verdict

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. EDMUND.

Facing p. 220.

of mankind, declared with their *Advocatus diaboli* pleading and their other forms of process that he had in very fact lived a hero's life in this world, and, being now *gone*, was gone, as they conceived, to God above, and reaping his reward *there*. Such, they said, was the best judgment they could form of the case; and truly not a bad judgment, acquiesced in and zealously adopted, with full assent of "private judgment," by all mortals.

'Pious munificence provided him a shrine, a wooden chapel, a stone temple, ever widening and growing by new pious gifts. Such the overflowing heart feels it a blessedness to solace itself by giving. The wooden chapel has become a stone temple; stately masonries; long-drawn arches, cloisters, sounding aisles buttress it and girdle it far and wide. The united companies of men devote themselves in every generation to meditation on man's nobleness and awfulness, and show forth the same as best as they can, thinking they will do it better here in presence of God the Maker and of the so Awful, so Noble made by Him. In one word, St. Edmund's body has raised a monastery around it. New gifts, houses, farms come ever in. King Canute with his crown and gifts; many other kings, queens, wise men, and noble, loyal men. Beodric's Worth has become St. Edmund's Bury, and lasts visible to this hour.

'Certain times do crystallise themselves in a magnificent manner. Let *us* withal be hopeful.'[1]

[1] Carlyle, *Past and Present.*

Dedications of churches: 55 (15 being in East Anglia), unless any be to St. Edmund the Archbishop. Represented in art crowned and pierced by many arrows, bound to a tree as above, a wolf guarding his body or crowned head, an arrow in his hand.

King Edward the Martyr.

March 18; Tr. *June* 20.

(Born A.D. 962; martyred A.D. 978; tr. 980. Calendars: Sarum only. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: Ecclus. xxxi. 8–11; St. Luke xiv. 26–33.)

About 200 years had passed since the Devonshire Bishop Boniface had fallen, martyred by the heathen Frisians, and the whole of the time England had been fighting for life, working her way from a group of divided tribes into a nation.

And at the heart of all the strife of races and dynasties had always been that deeper struggle for a higher unity, the combat for the Universal Kingdom of God through the faith in the unity of God and the unity of men in Christ.

For England at all events her very existence as a nation had been bound up with her Christianity, and her incorporation into the unity of the Christian Church.

The struggle had been first between the divided tribes of successive settlers from the Continent; then, especially between Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria, which it seemed as if nothing could have united into one nation but the external pressure of the invasions of the Danes and Northmen. In confronting these Northern pirates the men of Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria began to feel they were one England. In combat with these heathen persecutors and destroyers of cities, churches, and monasteries this one England felt the throb of her common Christianity.

In 730 England was so christianised that she could send out missionaries from her convents and monasteries north and south.

For the next two centuries the Northmen swept down on all her coasts, pillaging the abbeys in the north, where Bede and the Abbess Hilda had sown and watered the first

seeds of our English literature ; razing Peterborough, Crowland, and the great monastic houses in the Fen country to the ground, and massacring all within their walls ; destroying all traces of the Benedictine abbey and school of Nutcell, in Hampshire, where Boniface had learned and taught, and whence he had gone forth to evangelise Germany.

A hundred years after Boniface we have indeed another English martyr in our English Calendar, but it is a young English king, dying for the faith on English soil. And King Edmund had scarcely fallen beneath the heathen arrows in Suffolk when another king among the greatest in all the history of our English Church and nation began the great fight with the heathen in the west—Alfred the Truth-teller, Deliverer, and King.

It is a curious problem why King Alfred's name is absent from the Calendar. It cannot have been only because of the preference for monks and clergymen. Three other English kings are included. Nor can it have been because of any want of sympathy on his part with Rome. He recognised Rome as the centre of ecclesiastical unity, the link between Christian nations, the link between the present and the past of Christianity, visited its shrines with a pilgrim's devotion, was recognised and received by the Pope, and received from him a portion of the Lignum Domini, the Wood of the True Cross. Nor could it have been because the form of his piety was out of harmony with his times ; the religious books he loved and used and translated into the language of his people were the devotional manuals of his time ; and he himself was moved by a fervent and intense love to God, which was the inspiration of all his work and the solace of all his sufferings. Nor can the omission be explained by any want of popular enthusiasm for his memory. Upward, indeed, usually from the hearts of the people have the names of the saints been lifted to their places in the Calendar ; they have been consecrated by the tears and benedictions of the multitude before the ecclesiastical seal has been stamped upon them ; and deep in the hearts of the people was enshrined the name of Alfred. Why, then,

had he no place in any Calendar, no shrine in any city, no festival in the year?

Perhaps one reason chiefly accounts for the blank. Nothing but martyrdom seems to have placed any names save those of priests and monks in our ancient Calendar.

Nothing but the enthusiasm enkindled by the martyr's death seems to have given force enough to the popular voice to enroll any but those within the consecrated orders in the number of the saints. The tomb had to be the grave of a martyr that it might become the shrine of a saint.

And Alfred's life was not of the monastic type; nor, whatever the martyrdom of his life, did he die the martyr's death.

But in this omission there is more to inspire than to sadden. It simply emphasises the truth that beyond the few names on which the seal of human recognition has been set in the Calendar expands an infinite world of light. These stars, as the little child said of the stars in the sky, are but 'little pricks to let the glory through,' the glory of the boundless heavens around and beyond.

Alfred with his unwearied kingly rule, his holy home life, his thirty years of toiling and battling, shepherding and teaching, for his people, may represent for us a whole heaven of uncanonised saints, toilers, and warriors, working for others in castles and camps, in lonely hovels, in dingy streets, thinking nothing of themselves, fathers and mothers, teachers and patterns of saints. Alfred, uncanonised, lives between our two canonised English royal saints. The shrines of Edmund and Edward the Martyrs shine over Christian England, jewelled and decorated. Alfred enabled Christian England to *be*, and that is honour enough for him.

King Edward the Martyr has his own sacred lesson to teach in his brief boyish life. Archbishop Dunstan had been labouring for years under King Edgar to fulfil the work of King Alfred by pacifying the Danelagh and turning the heathen Northmen and Danes into Christian Englishmen.

At the death of Edgar Edward was a boy of thirteen,

guided by the counsel of Dunstan. His stepmother, Elfrida, had intrigued in vain to set him aside in favour of her own son Ethelred, then seven years old. Dunstan faithfully guarded the rightful heir, and he was solemnly crowned.

The boy seems to have had a marked character of his own—gentle and affectionate, generous to the poor, thoughtful for the weak and suffering, and never moved by his stepmother's jealousy and injustice from his generous brotherly affection for his little brother, her son, nor yet turned aside from his respectful deference to her.

So he lived and reigned three years and a half. His early death at seventeen was the result of his own trustful, affectionate character. He had been hunting all day in a forest near Wareham, and, weary with the chase, rode up in the evening through the narrow little rocky pass called Corfe Gate to pay a visit to his stepmother and his little brother in Corfe Castle. At the castle door he asked to see his young brother, and waited outside till he should come.

They gave him a cup of wine to drink. He had emptied it and was courteously bending forward to give it back, when he was treacherously stabbed by Elfrida's orders. Finding himself betrayed and wounded, with a dying effort he put spurs to his horse and rode away ; but after a few steps he fell from his horse, dead. His body was cast into a marsh to be hidden and forgotten. But the people loved their young king ; it was believed that a pillar of light revealed where his corpse was laid ; it was removed to the church at Wareham, and afterwards translated to the monastery of Shaftesbury.

The long thin knife with which he was stabbed was kept at Faversham till the suppression of the monasteries.

There are two festivals connected with that boy king in our Calendar, commemorating these two translations of his murdered body.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reveals the depth of popular indignation felt at his death. After the quiet record, 'A.D. 979. This year was King Edward slain at eventide, at Corfe-gate, on the 15th before the Kalends of

April, and then was he buried at Wareham without any kind of kingly honours,' it breaks into a poetical dirge :—

There has not been among Angles
A worse deed done
Than this was
Since they first
Britain's land sought.
Men him murdered,
But God him glorified.
He was in life
An earthly king ;
He is now, after death,
A heavenly saint.
Him could not his earthly
Kinsmen avenge,
But him hath his heavenly Father
Greatly avenged.
The earthly murderers
Would his memory
On this earth blot out,
But the lofty Avenger
Hath his memory
In the heavens
And in earth wide spread.
They who would not erewhile
To his living
Body bow down,
They now humbly
On knees bend
To his dead bones.
Now we may understand
That men's wisdom
And their devices
And their counsels
Are all nought
Against God's resolves.

The young life, so full of promise, was suddenly cut off in this world; but not till he had engraven in our English Calendar the great lesson that death met in the carrying out of everyday duties, such as an act of affection to a little brother or of courtesy in return for unkindness, may lift the sufferer to a place among the martyrs.[1]

[1] Dedications of churches: 21, either to him or to St. Edward the Confessor; that at Corfe Castle certainly to the 'Martyr.' Represented in art as a king with dagger, falcon, or cup.

St. Alphege of Canterbury.[1]

April 19.

(Calendars: Sarum, Aberdeen. Born A.D. 954; consecrated bishop A.D. 984; martyred A.D. 1012. Sarum Ep. and Gosp.: Heb. xiii. 9–16; St. John xv. 1–7.)

The lesson of the next and last of our martyrs is not unlike that of King Edward. Alphege fell in the fulfilment of his Christian duties to his flock and to his trust, in a raid of the heathen Northern pirates against England, just before the reign of Canute, the Christian Danish king.

His successor, Lanfranc, doubted if he could be termed a martyr, not having been called on to deny the name of Christ; but St. Anselm decided that death in the discharge of Christian duty was death for Christ.

St. Alphege was born of noble and virtuous parents, who gave him a good education. 'Fearing the snares of riches, he renounced the world while he was yet very young, and though most dutiful to his parents in all things, in this one thing he did not yield even to the tears of his tender mother.'

'He served God first in the monastery of Derherste, in Gloucestershire. His desire of greater perfection taught him always to think that he had not yet begun to live to God.'

'After some years he left Derherste and built himself a cell in a desert place near the Abbey of Bath, where he shut himself up, unknown to men. His virtue, after some time, shone to men the brighter through the veil of his

[1] Alban Butler and *Les Petits Bollandistes*. 'From his genuine Life, written by Osborn, a monk of Canterbury, in 1070, but finished by Eadmer.' Dedications of churches: five, one being the parish church of Greenwich, on the supposed site of the murder. Another is in London. Represented in art with stones in his chasuble; a battleaxe in his hand.

humility, and many noblemen and others addressed themselves to him for instructions in the paths of perfection, and he was at length obliged to take upon himself the direction of the Abbey of Bath. Perfection is with difficulty maintained in numerous houses.'

'St. Alphege lamented bitterly the irregularities of the tepid among the brethren, especially little junketings, from which he in a short time reclaimed them; and God, by the sudden death of one, opened the eyes of all the rest. The good abbot would not tolerate the least relaxation in the community, being sensible how small a breach may totally destroy the regularity of a house. He used to say that it would have been much better for a man to have remained in the world than to be an imperfect monk, and that to wear the habit of a saint without the spirit was a perpetual lie, and an hypocrisy which insults Almighty God, but can never impose on Him. St. Ethelwold (Bishop of Winchester) having died in 984, St. Dunstan (being admonished by St. Andrew in a vision) obliged Alphege to quit his solitude and accept of episcopal consecration. His virtues became more conspicuous in this high station, though he was no more than thirty years of age when he was first placed in it. In winter, how cold soever it was, he always rose at midnight, went out, and prayed for a long time barefoot and without his upper garment. He never ate flesh except on extraordinary occasions. He was no less remarkable for charity to his neighbours than for severity to himself.' And his charity was so effectually organised that it is said to have had the remarkable result, so earnestly sought to be obtained in our own days by various methods, not of increasing beggars, but of abolishing beggary! 'During his time there were no beggars in the diocese of Winchester.'

After the death of Archbishop Alfric in 1006, he was translated to Canterbury, being then fifty-two years of age.

The Northmen at that time, under Sweyn of Norway, were once more ravaging England. Sweyn's fleet reached the coast in 1003, and for four years he marched through

southern and eastern England, burning towns and homesteads and monasteries, and massacring the inhabitants.

At last, joined by the traitorous Edric, he invested Canterbury. Before the city was surrounded, the English nobility entreated the archbishop to save himself by flight.

But he refused, saying it was the part of a hireling to abandon his flock in danger.

During the siege he often sent out to his enemies to desire them to spare the innocent people; and meantime he endeavoured to animate his flock against the worst. He exhorted them to suffer the worst rather than renounce their faith; he gave them the Blessed Eucharist, and recommended them to the Divine protection.

Whilst he was thus sustaining and encouraging his people, Canterbury was taken by storm. The heathen invaders, as they entered the city, made a dreadful slaughter of all that came in their way, without distinction of sex or age. The monks would have kept the archbishop in the church, where they thought he might be safe, but he broke from them, and pressed through the Danish troops to the scene of slaughter.

Then turning to the enemy he cried out, 'Spare these innocent persons. There is no glory in spilling their blood. Turn your indignation rather against me. I have reproached your cruelties; I have fed, clothed, and ransomed these your captives.'

Enraged at his bold freedom of speech, the fierce Northmen seized the archbishop and treated him with great barbarity. They made him the spectator of the burning of his cathedral and the decimation of his monks and of the citizens; they wounded his face, beat and kicked him unmercifully, laid him in irons, and confined him several months in a filthy dungeon. But being themselves afflicted with a fatal epidemic, a terror came on them lest it might be a vengeance from heaven for their cruel usage of the archbishop, and they drew him out of prison. He prayed for them and gave their sick bread which he had blessed. 'By eating this their sick recovered, and the epidemic ceased.'

The chiefs returned thanks to the servant of God, and deliberated about setting him at liberty; but covetousness prevailed in their council, and they exacted for his ransom three thousand marks of gold.

He replied that the country was all laid waste, and that he would not squander the patrimony of the poor on his ransom.

He was therefore bound again, and on Easter Sunday was brought before the commander of the fleet, which lay at Greenwich, and threatened with torments and death unless he paid the ransom demanded. He answered that he had no other gold to offer them than that of true wisdom, which consists in the knowledge and worship of the Living God; which, if they refused to listen to, they would one day fare worse than Sodom; adding that their empire would not long subsist in England.

The barbarians, enraged at this answer, knocked him down with the backs of their battle-axes and then stoned him. Like Stephen, among the stones, he prayed our Lord to forgive his murderers and to receive his soul.

At last, raising himself up a little, he said, 'O Good Shepherd, O incomparable Shepherd, look with compassion on the children of Thy Church, whom I, dying, recommend to Thee.'

The death stroke came from a friendly hand. One of the Northmen whom he had lately baptised, grieving to see him tortured in that slow agony, clove his head with a battle-axe, and so gave the finishing stroke to his martyrdom.

Thus died St. Alphege on April 19, 1012, in the 59th year of his age, at Greenwich, as near the opened heavens as at Jerusalem, not a step further from the Master's footsteps for the thousand years between him and St. Stephen amidst his stones.

His body was borne to St. Paul's, in London, and translated, eleven years afterwards, to his own Cathedral at Canterbury, King Canute the Dane following in reverent homage down the narrow street to the river-side and himself

holding the stern of the boat as they laid the martyred body in it.

Better close the glorious martyr story can scarcely have than in this brave and loving man dying as he was pleading for his flock; dying for fidelity to his trust for the poor; dying among the stones, pleading for his enemies, like Stephen the first martyr. Not once or twice in the great story of the Church,

> Not once or twice in our rough island story,
> The path of duty was the way to glory.
> For he who walks it only thirsting
> For the right, and learns to deaden
> Love of self, before his journey closes
> He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
> Into glossy purples, which outredden
> All voluptuous garden roses.
>
> Not once or twice in our fair island story
> The path of duty was the way to glory:
> He that ever following her commands,
> On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
> Through the long gorge to the far light has won
> His path upward, and prevail'd,
> Shall find the toppling crags of duty scaled
> Are close upon the shining table-lands,
> To which our God Himself is moon and sun.[1]

'Earl Thurkill, a Christian Dane, offered gold and silver, all that he had, save only his ship, to save St. Alphege's life.'—Blunt's *Annotated Prayer Book.*

Another Account of the Martyrdom of St. Alphege.

(From the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.)

1011. 'And, nevertheless, for all the truce and tribute they' (the Northmen) 'went everywhere in bands and plundered our miserable people, and robbed and slew them. And then, in this year, between the Nativity of St. Mary and St. Michael's Mass, they besieged Canterbury, and got into it through treachery, because Elfmar betrayed it, whose life the Archbishop Elphege had before saved. And there they took the Archbishop Elphege, and Elfward (the king's steward), and the Abbess Leofruna, and Bishop Godwin. And Abbot

[1] Tennyson, *Ode on the Duke of Wellington.*

Elfmar they let go away. And they took there within all the men in orders, and men and women: it is not to be told to any man how many there were. And they remained within the city afterwards as long as they would. And when they had thoroughly searched the city, then went they to their ships, and led the Archbishop with them.

Was then captive
He who erewhile was
Head of the English race
And Christendom.

There might then be seen
Misery, where men oft
Erewhile saw bliss
In that hapless city,

Whence to us came first
Christendom and bliss,
'Fore God, and 'fore the world.

And they kept the Archbishop with them so long as until the time they martyred him.'

1012. 'In this year came Edric, the ealdorman, and all the chief witan, clergy, and laity of the English people to London, before Easter; Easter-day was then on the Ides of April, and they were there so long as until all the tribute was paid, after Easter; that was eight-and-forty thousand pounds. Then, on the Saturday, was the army greatly excited against the Bishop, because he would not promise them any money; but *he forbade that anything should be given for him.* They had also drunk deeply, for wine had been brought there from the south. Then took they the Bishop, led him to their hustings on the eve of Sunday, the octaves of Easter, which was on the 13th before the Kalends of May; and there they shamefully slaughtered him. They cast upon him bones and the horns of oxen, and then one of them struck him with an axe-iron on the head, so that with the blow he sank down; and *his holy blood fell on the earth, and his holy soul he sent forth to God's kingdom.*

'And on the morrow the body was carried to London, and the Bishops Ednoth and Elfhun and the townsmen received it with all reverence.'

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